315 / AUGUST 1999

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

PRICE: UK £2.50 AUS. $5.60 AOTEAROA/NZ $5.50 CANADA/US $4.50 ◆ THE PEOPLE, THE IDEAS, THE ACTION IN THE F

The great education scandal

- ◆ The Coca-Cola classroom
- ◆ Gender canyon
- ◆ Testing, testing, 123
- ◆ Who's selling the world's children down the river?

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Ahmed, aged nine, at Al-Mansour hospital, Baghdad. He has had three courses of chemotherapy for his leukaemia.

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The New Internationalist exists to report on the issues of world poverty and inequality; to focus attention on the unjust relationship between the powerful and powerless in both rich and poor nations; to debate and campaign for the radical changes necessary within and between those nations if the basic material and spiritual needs of all are to be met; and to bring to life the people, the ideas and the action in the fight for world development.

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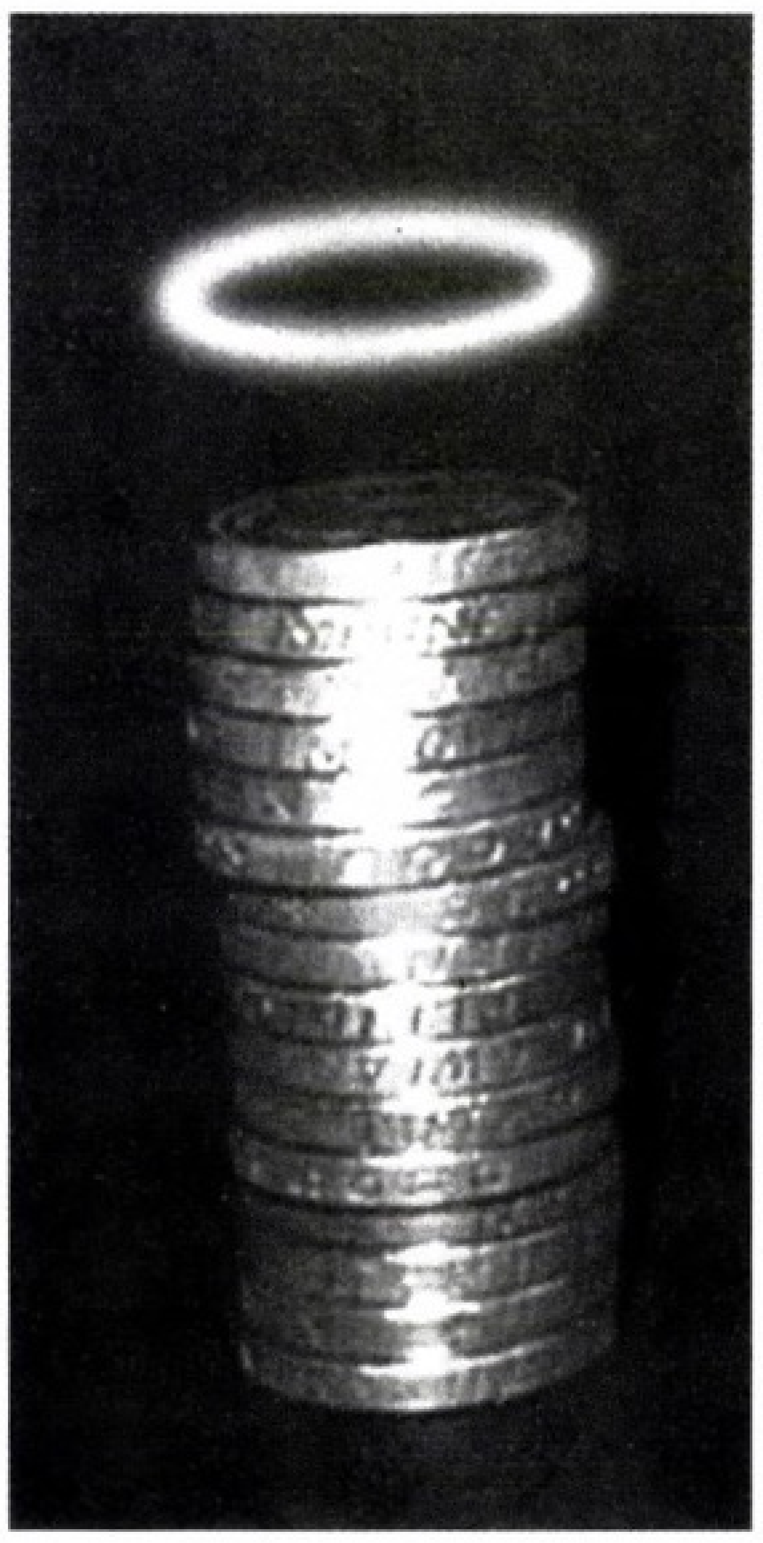

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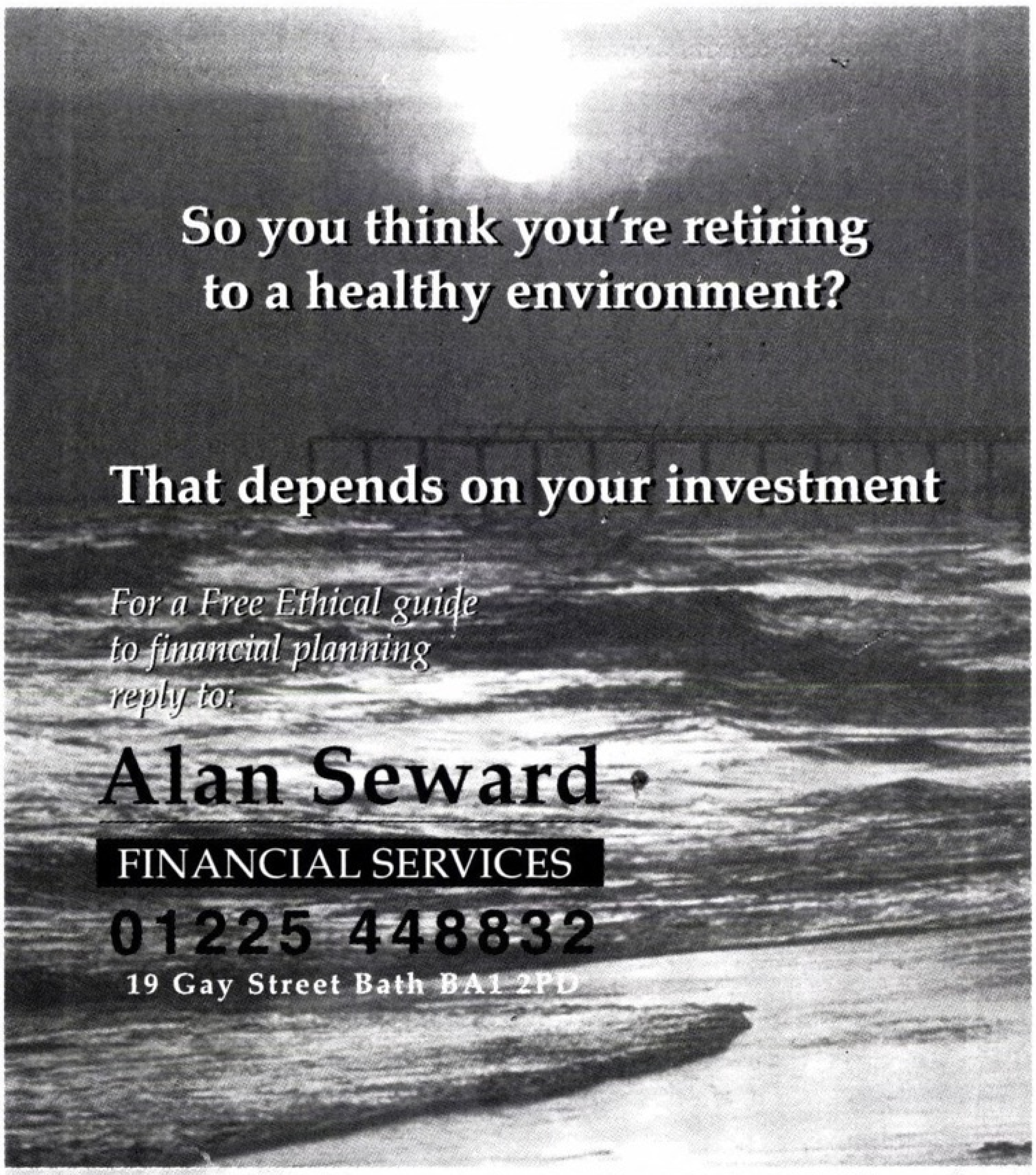
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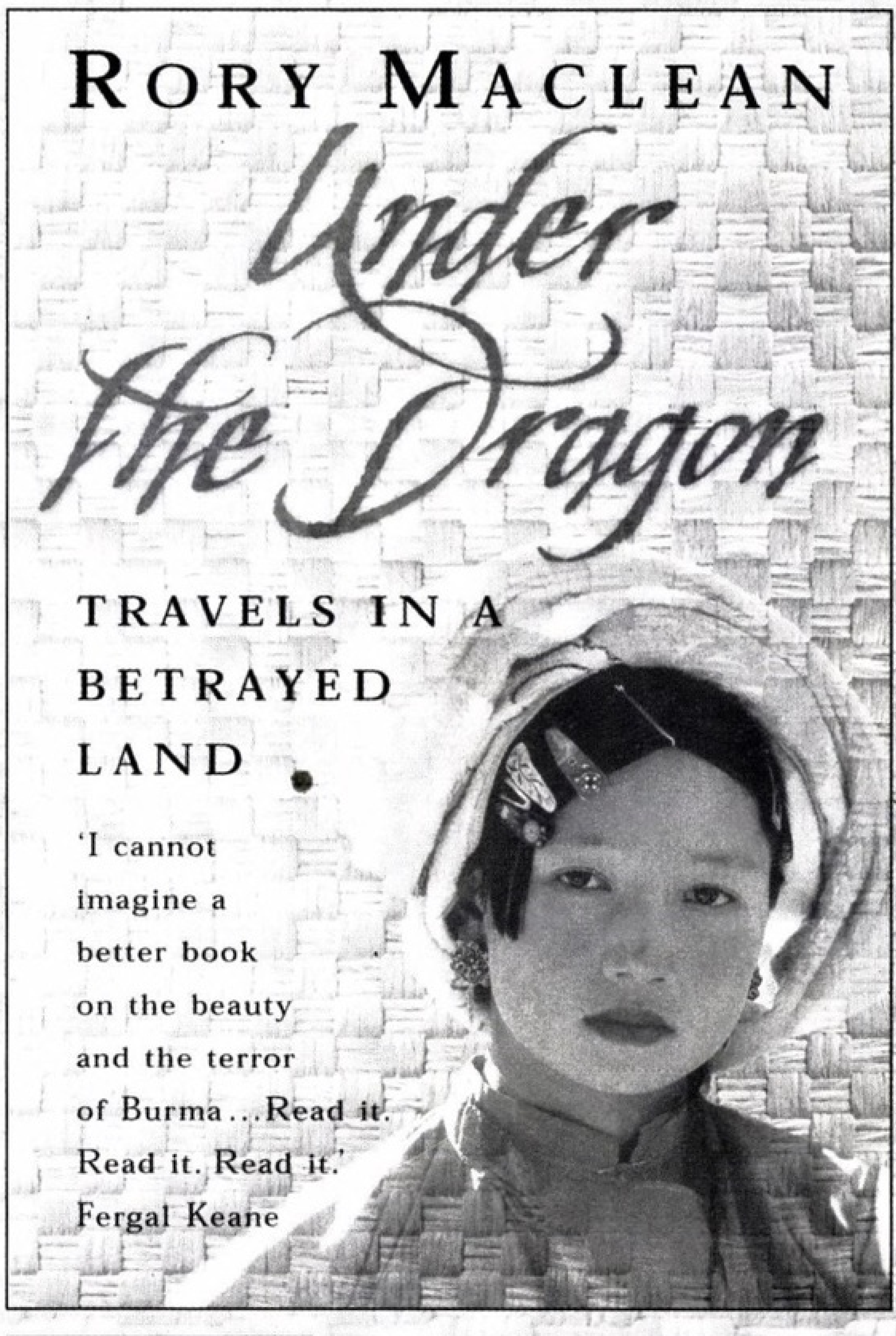

RORY MACLEAN

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MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **ALAN HUGHES**.

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Education

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

THE editor's letter is always the last part of any *New Internationalist* issue to be written. Which is odd, really, given that it may well be the first thing people read – not because it appears first, but because it is short, approachable and personal. It may suffer occasionally as a result of the brain-dead state that editors are liable to fall into near the end of the production process.

Like many magazines, I imagine, we are currently re-evaluating what we do, spurred on by the all-invasive millennium deadline. And as part of that review the editor's letter has looked vulnerable. 'It's a bit of fluff,' some have said. 'If it rehearses the arguments in the main section it's boring, while any pretence that it gives readers a demystifying glimpse behind the scenes (its original rationale) has long gone.'

If these arguments are true, my own guess is that it is only because we aren't hitting the right notes. Granted that describing the mechanics of magazine production would be a hit only with chronic insomniacs, there is usually at least one tricky decision or ethical dilemma involved somewhere in the creation of an issue that could usefully be exposed to the light.

So what would that be in this case? Perhaps the wrangling over whether we should cover the danger that the millennium bug in computers could set off nuclear weapons. This small matter of possibly imminent Armageddon did not loom fully into view until I was well down the road with an issue on education. For obvious reasons, it seemed like a topic which needed urgent attention – planning a magazine on the subject for February 2000 would be amusing perhaps but not exactly useful. Yet could I tear up my education project and go back to square one?

I put the question to the editorial team at one of our regular weekly meetings, which now involve an open phone conference with Toronto and will soon include Adelaide as well. I sketched out how both issues would work, put the pros and cons with admirable balance and... and... my colleagues divided down the middle, putting the ball back in my court. Thanks a bunch.

The solution I came up with was to continue with the education project but give over the central four pages of the magazine to a campaigning blast on the nuclear danger. This has changed the whole geography of the issue. It means, for example, that the education section has its factual graphics sprinkled throughout rather than collated on one setpiece visual. It also means there are two separate action pages (20 and 30) with extensive lists of ideas and contacts – even two separate campaigns which urge you to put pressure on governments by writing letters or postcards. But then you're always telling us you want to know how to help...

Chris Brazier

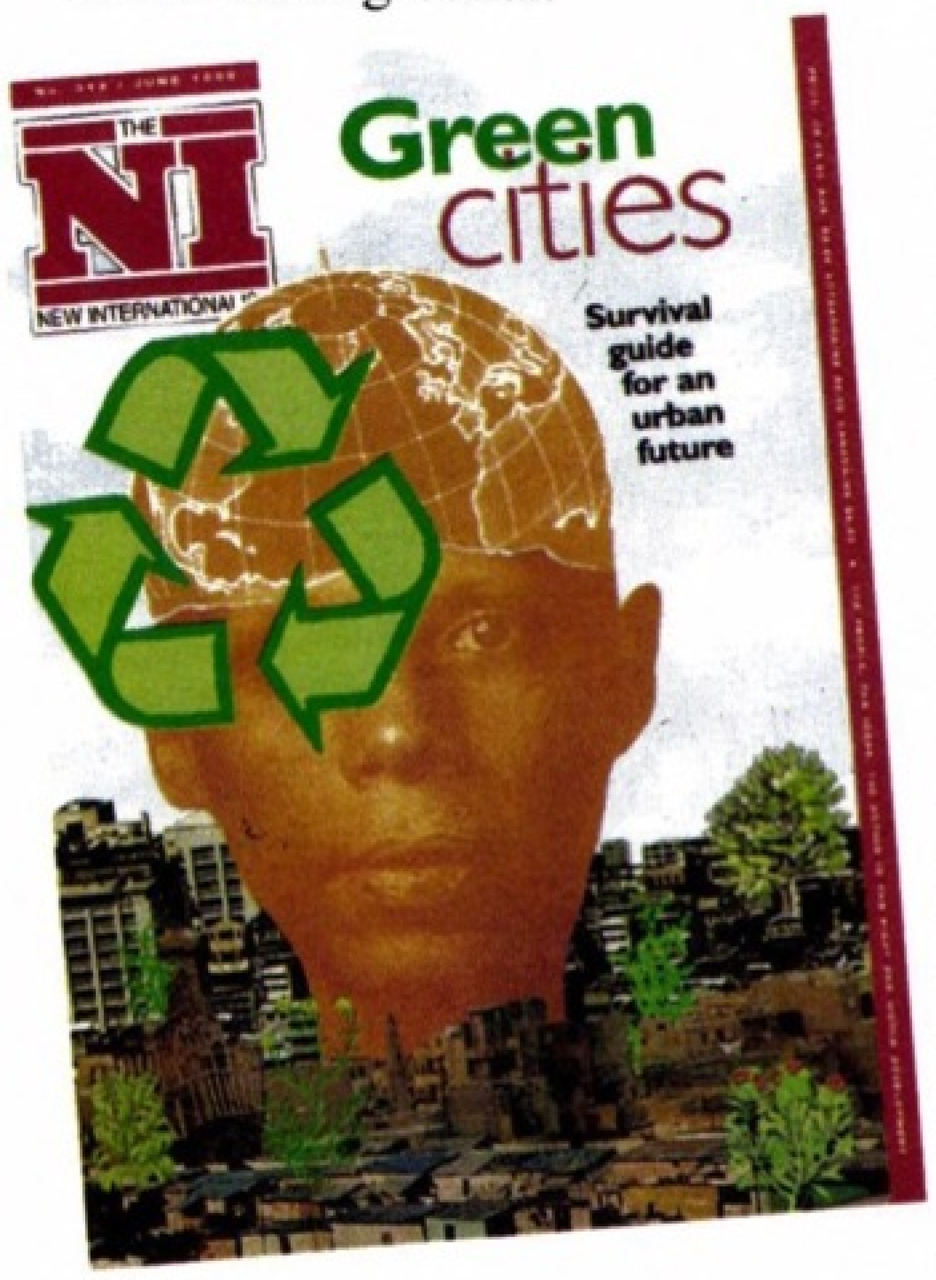
Chris Brazier
*for the **New Internationalist** Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address and e-mail are inside the front cover.

Vegetarian bias

There appears to be a bias in favour of vegetarianism in your magazine, especially in ***Green Cities*** (**NI 313**) where it seems that not eating meat will help to make cities greener.


THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST
Green cities
Survival guide for an urban future

I agree that the wasteful consumption of meat should not be encouraged, but the issue is not clear-cut. In the UK mixed farming provides habitats for wildlife in the form of grassland and hedgerows which are not needed for arable farming. Also some land is not suitable for growing crops but is suitable for grazing.

Worldwide many communities keep livestock to suit their nomadic lifestyle, where attempts by governments to constrain the movement of such groups have led to environmental degradation (for example in the Masai Mara areas in Kenya).

In the 'Green Odyssey' article the authors promote vegetarianism without acknowledging the role that animals (for example water buffalo) have in some of the countries visited. These animals provide high-quality protein, transport, fertilizer, material for footwear or clothing and can be used as draught animals – surely a more environmental alternative than tractors. Animal products such as leather are more biodegradable than their plastic counterparts.

I am not a farmer, I do not eat McDonald's hamburgers for breakfast but I have thought beyond the emotional debate about eating animals and am proud to eat a sausage or two (free range from the local butchers). After all, food shortages in certain areas are not caused by lack of food worldwide but by inequalities in distribution. It is these issues I believe the **NI** should be addressing, rather than acting as a mouthpiece for the vegetarian lobby.

Anna Perceval
Norwich, England

Sudanese slaves

Anti-Slavery is concerned that your *Update* 'Scandalous trade' (**NI 312**) overestimates the number of slaves held in Sudan. The total may be several thousands but there is no evidence that it is as high as 20,000 people.

Recent publicity has focused on claims that more than 2,700 slaves have been released since January 1999 in return for payments totalling over $100,000 and on accusations by US-based groups that UN agencies are not doing enough to free slaves. Anti-Slavery does not support the practice of paying for the release of slaves. This is no more acceptable than paying bribes to secure the release of prisoners. However, the international community has been remarkably unsuccessful in persuading the Government of Sudan to take action to end slavery. The result is that the Government continues to deny that slavery even exists. The UN Commission on Human Rights has condemned what it calls 'forced labour' in Sudan. It makes no difference what it is called – the fact is that people are being abducted by government-backed militias and are being exploited as slaves in the households of militiamen and others, and it is the Government of Sudan which is best placed to take actions to trace and free all those who have been abducted.

Mike Dottridge
Anti-Slavery, London, England

Japanese debt

After reading your issue on debt, (**NI 312**) I wanted to write to you about the issue of debt in Japan.

Japan is the G7's biggest creditor. It has $9 billion in outstanding loans which comprises around 40 per cent of all G7 credits. The Japanese Government is trying to provide indebted countries with 'debt-relief-grant-aid'. This is not unconditional cancellation but means that the Government gives the countries the same amount as their repayment. This grant aid is a commodity grant in which recipient countries receive Japanese commodities. This is actually relief for Japanese companies.

About half the yen loan money is borrowed from Trust Fund Bureau Funds and Postal Life Insurance Fund. If all debt were to be cancelled Japanese people would not receive the money they have saved for their old age – at the highest cost in the world. The Government has been lending our precious saved money without our consent and is charging people in Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs) without their consent. This is a real moral hazard.

I have enough to live on. I am ready to pay for unconditional cancellation to cut the chain.

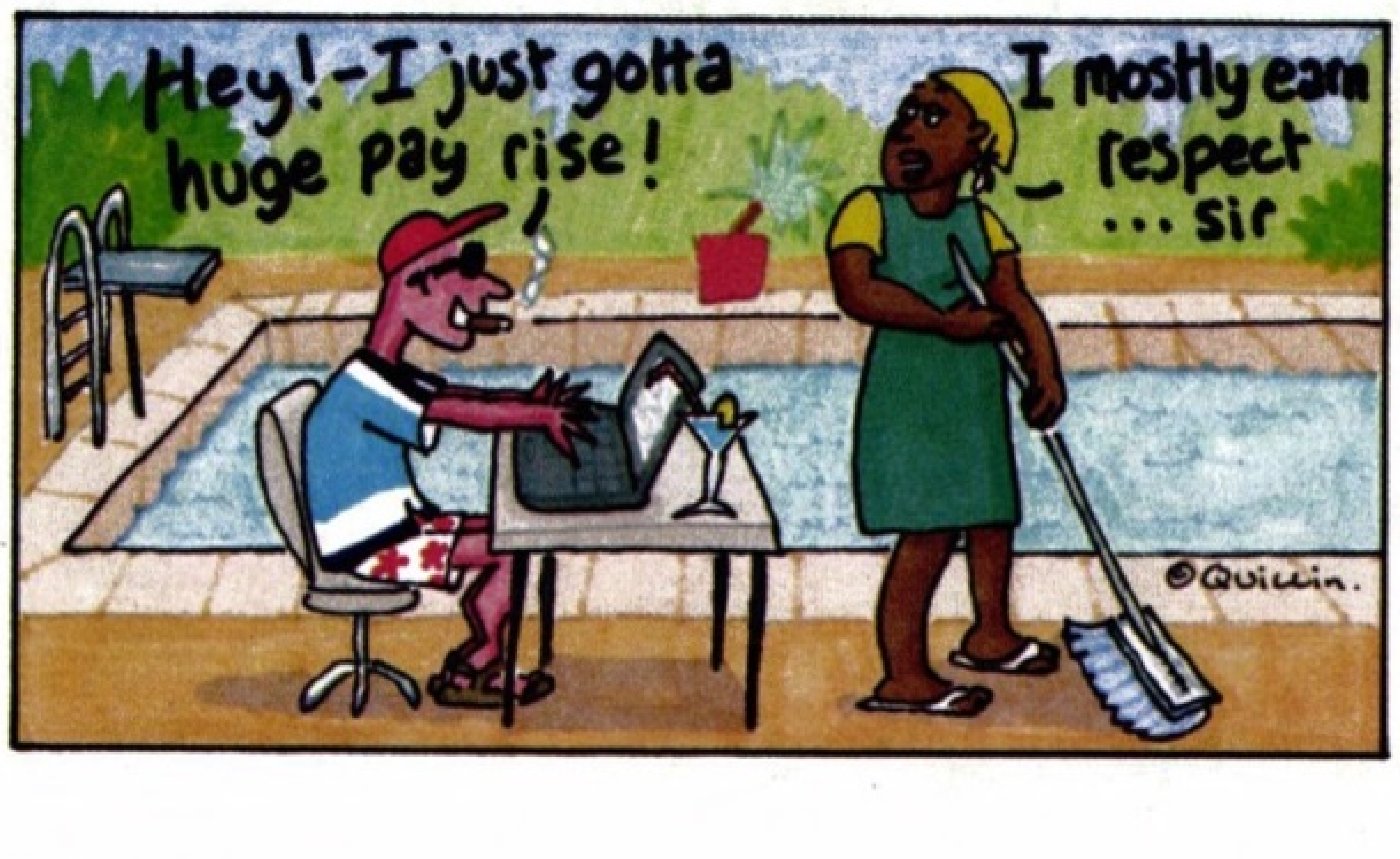
Mariko Inoue
Kyoto, Japan

Human dignity

Chris Holt illustrates in a small way the blinkered vision which bedevils Western attempts to solve Third World problems when he says about a Zambian electrician (**NI 312**) 'It's nearly two years since Lefkata lost his job – and with it his human dignity.'

No. It is only in the West that human dignity is measured by salary. In Africa, men and women who have never earned a penny may be known to possess immense human dignity. It's their most valuable possession.

Mtumiki Njira
Limbe, Malawi


Hey! - I just gotta huge pay rise!
I mostly earn respect ... sir
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VIV QUILLAN

Alternative dove

I can forgive your 'Superdove' spread (**NI 311**) only if you assure me that it was an April Fool's joke designed to get intelligent readers off their bikes. Far from being creative and courageous, it was repetitive and simple-minded. May I suggest a few alternatives?

* Do everything well. Be honest and reliable and earn the respect of your employer.

* Simplify your life. Don't incur debts for things you don't need.

* Walk or ride a bike even if all your friends are petrol-heads – explain to them that Western over-consumption is a factor creating world tensions. Use and promote public transport.

* Exercise good stewardship over your own health in what you take in.

* Be intelligently informed. Avoid clichés and catch-phrases because they are often substitutes for thinking.

* Do some formal training in something useful (renewables, permaculture, conflict resolution, microeconomics etc). When you are intelligently informed or qualified go somewhere dangerous or difficult where your skills are desperately needed – and give them away

for free. Go where the poor and disadvantaged people are and stand with them.

Ted Carr
Rosanna, Victoria, Australia

Writing off poverty

ATD Fourth World (**NI 310**) is currently running a postcard campaign in the UK 'Writing off Poverty' to call on the Prime Minister to declare 17 October 2000 as the first annual National day for the Eradication of Poverty. The introduction of such a day will not only recognize that poverty remains a reality for millions of people in the UK today, but will also encourage society to include them in its plans and progress. It will act as a rallying point for the Government's endeavours to bring Britain together, and reinforce the fight against poverty and exclusion for the new millennium.

If you are interested in the campaign please contact us at 48 Addington Square, London SE5 7LB.

Thomas Croft
ATD Fourth World, London, England

Serbian Australians

I have been keeping in contact with Serbian Australians who have quite legitimate concerns for family and friends affected by NATO action in Serbia and are distressed at the long-term effects of the conflict on the economy of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I have also heard their stories about discrimination directed at members of their community including children in schools.

They have expressed to me their wish that the Australian media could be more sensitive to their feelings, especially as the majority of them are Australian citizens.

Despite the differences the Australian Government has with the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia there is no excuse for any form of discrimination, whether direct, indirect or subtle, to be directed at Australians of Serbian origin.

Philip Ruddock MP
Canberra, Australia

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

Letter from Lebanon

Mona's mission

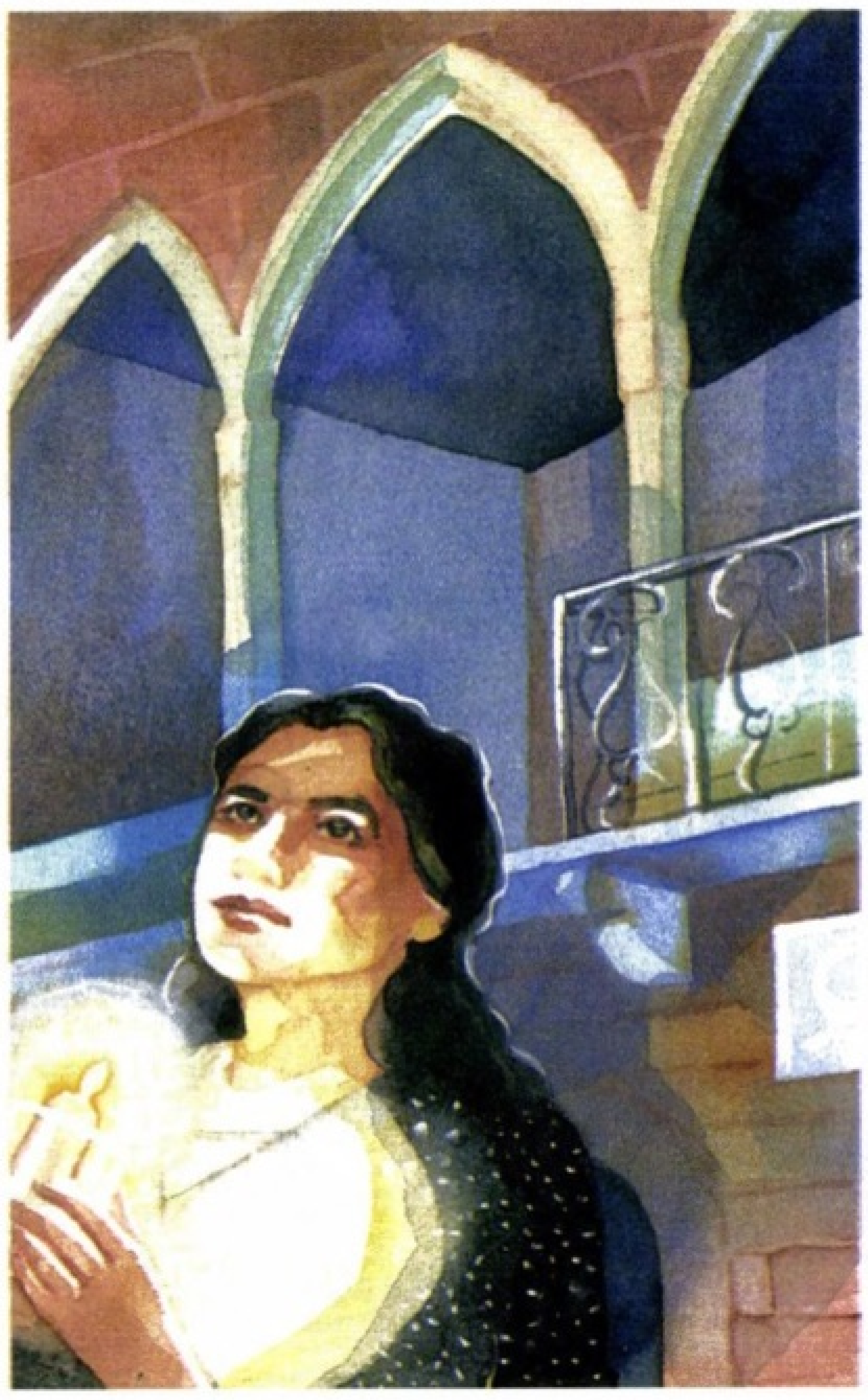
In the first of a new series of letters from Lebanon, **Reem Haddad** reports on the fight to save Beirut's old houses from being demolished.

I HAD just arrived home after a long working day when the phone rang. The voice was anxious and pleading. It could only be Mona Hallak.

'Reem, you have to come now,' she cried. 'Another old house is about to be demolished.'

Not again, I thought. Only a few weeks ago, chauffeured by Mona, I had joined several heritage activists in pleading with authorities to save a house dating from the 1920s. This has become Mona's mission.

Beirut was once dotted with beautiful houses, many reflecting the elegance of the Ottoman period and the later post-World War One French Mandate era. With the end of the 16-year Lebanese civil war in 1990, owners of old houses discovered that they were living on gold mines. While most of the existing buildings were worthless, the price of land had soared. One by one, proprietors began selling their properties to developers who were seeking a quick profit. The old houses were pulled down to be replaced by concrete tower blocks, combining the bland and the ostentatious.


SARAH JOHN

Angry, Mona now frequently wanders the streets of Beirut tracking down those old buildings whose windows or roof tiles have been removed.

'This is a sign that demolition work is about to begin,' she explains. 'They do it quietly so as not to alert heritage activists.'

She has developed a prodigious knowledge of old buildings in Beirut and their various characteristics.

Her telephone call to me concerned the fate of a two-storey house in the Zoqaq al-Blat quarter near the city centre. The building was typically Lebanese, with graceful arched windows, high ceilings and terracotta roof tiles. It was surrounded by similar examples of early twentieth-century architecture. Although shabby after the war, the cluster of buildings was breathtaking. Mona pointed to the missing red tiles. We peeked in through a wrought iron gate to see the garden and the house's rare marble floor slabs stacked up outside ready to be sold. The workers, however, spotted us and turned us away.

'The owners want to build a huge high-rise complex here,' she said. 'This means that this whole cluster of houses will also be ruined.'

The struggle to preserve Beirut's traditional architecture was launched in 1995 when heritage activists began pressuring the Government to prevent old houses from being torn down.

An activist organization, APSAD (Association Pour la Protection des Sites et Anciennes Demeures au Liban) studied many of Beirut's old houses and suggested to the Government which should be protected. The then Minister of Culture 'froze' over 1,000 houses, forbidding any demolition work. But when the owners received no financial compensation from the Government, many sought to release their homes from the development ban. Almost half of them were successful. Today, only 520 homes are still 'frozen'. One of them was supposedly the two-storey villa which Mona and I had inspected. So why was the owner in the process of pulling it down?

As soon as I called up the Minister of Culture for an interview, the mystery was solved. He said he had personally authorized its demolition, 'and I will allow many others to be pulled down as well,' he declared. 'They're old so why keep them? Why should I deny someone from making a lot of money by building a large modern complex?'

Mona's face fell when I reported the Minister's answer. 'How can we fight against that?' she said slowly. 'It seems we're alone.'

The next day, however, she invited me to a candlelit vigil she was holding outside the doomed house.

Completely forgetting her full-time job in an architecture firm, she spent the whole day inviting friends to join her. 'We must save these houses,' she stressed to people around her. 'This is our heritage.'

That same night demolition work ceased on the house. Influential people had reportedly interfered. Since no decision has been taken about the house's fate, Mona keeps a wary eye on it.

Meanwhile, my phone keeps ringing. 'Hurry up and get here,' she jabbered a few days ago. 'Ten old houses on one street are about to be destroyed.'

And I ran. ■

Reem Haddad is a reporter with the *Daily Star* in Beirut.

Update

PAKISTAN

Typewriter guerrillas

Government attacks critical journalism

Extra! – the once vibrant Pakistani press is dying.

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

ONE of Pakistan's most respected journalists, chief editor of the weekly *The Friday Times* Najam Sethi, was dragged out of bed and beaten up in a Gestapo-style operation by over a dozen men, along with two uniformed police, who barged into his home in Lahore. Sethi's wife, Jugnu Mohsin, herself an editor and publisher of the magazine and a respected journalist, was pushed aside. When she asked to see an arrest warrant, Jugnu was told that she would get 'your husband's corpse instead'.

The next day, a government spokesperson reported that the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), had arrested Sethi. He accused Sethi of delivering a highly objectionable speech in New Delhi, capital of Pakistan's traditionally hostile neighbour, India. The ISI is now reportedly investigating Sethi's 'nexus' with the Indian spy service known as the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Sethi belongs to one of the highly influential families of Punjab, the home province of Pakistan's right-wing premier Nawaz Sharif. 'Sethi was personally very close to the first couple,' says Zamir Niazi, chronicler of the long and ongoing skirmish between the press and the establishment. He implies that if the state could target high-profile Sethi, no other journalist is safe.

Sethi's case is now in the Supreme Court. He has been booked under the extra-civilian Army Act 1962 and also under the draconian Official Secrets Act.

Sethi's arrest was not the first incident of its kind. On 4 May, another high-profile journalist and Pakistan's former ambassador to Sri Lanka, Hussain Haqqani, was picked up while he was going to the Islamabad airport. Haqqani was leaving for Dubai to meet self-exiled opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

After his arrest, several cases of corruption were leveled against him. Yet a third investigative journalist, MAK Lodhi, was picked up and tortured. He was freed two days later.

These were not isolated incidents: Sethi, Haqqani and Lodhi had assisted a BBC team to prepare the weekly documentary, *Correspondent*. The Government appears to be scared stiff that its corruption might become public knowledge internationally, say independent observers.

In the first editorial since Sethi's arrest, *The Friday Times* comments: 'Journalism is a tough job in countries where the tradition of freedom is weak, where governments are intolerant, where rulers have skeletons rattling away in their cupboards. From tax evasion to spurious cases to harassment to apostasy and now to downright abduction, every trick has been tried to tame the profession'.

Celebrated author Bapsi Sidhwa aptly sums up the present situation. In her letter to *The Friday Times*, she says: 'Freedom of the press was something Pakistanis prized, something they had become accustomed to in the past decade or so. Already I am talking of it in the past tense, for we have just seen its demise.'

But like the other typewriter guerrillas – who support the minuscule but vibrant Pakistani press – Sidhwa does not lose hope: 'I mourn its passing, but with the efforts of journalists the world over, and of organizations like the Freedom Forum, one hopes for a resurrection.' ■

Ahmar Mustikhan

Lolita & The Prophet are ostracized

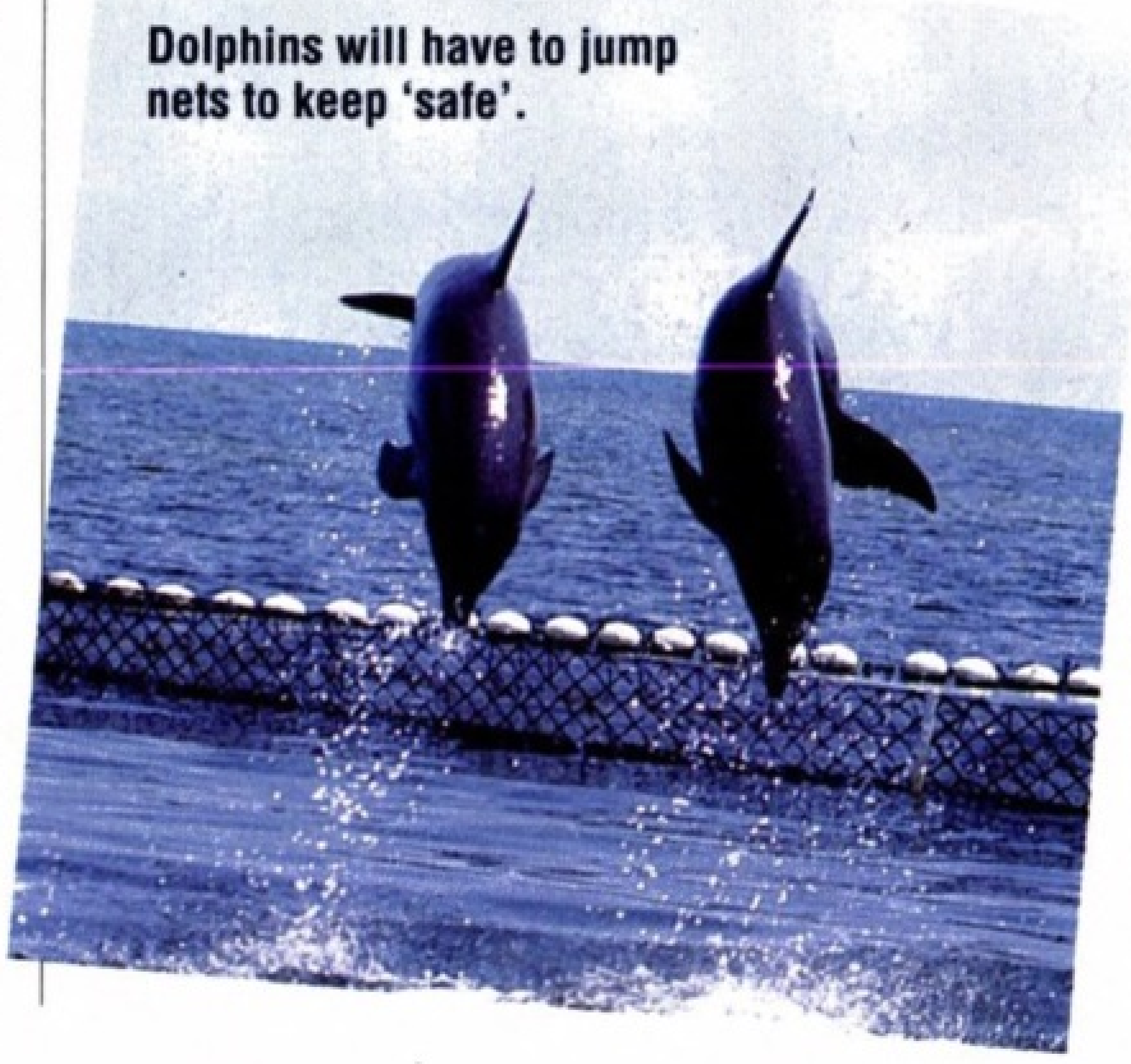
Egypt's censors have banned dozens of books ordered by the American University bookstore in Cairo. Over the past ten months the authorities have banned 70 titles and requested the revision of over 450 books, more than they have requested over the past 10 years according to the University's press director Mark Linz. Banned works include Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, *The Prophet* by Kahil Gibran, *Islamic Political Thought* by Montgomery Watt and *Cities of Salt* by Abdel-Rahman Mounif. State censorship intensified last year when the University was forced to drop the book *Mohammed* by Maxime Rodinson last year due to complaints from alumni and parents. *Al Khubz Al Hafi* (*For Bread Alone*) by Moroccan writer Mohamed Choukri was also dropped after parents claimed it was 'destructive to the morals of our children'.

World Press Review Vol 46 No 6

Safe lies

'Dolphin safe' is going to take on a whole new meaning in the US. Now new government regulations will allow the label to be used on cans of tuna – even if the fish were caught by boats that chased and encircled schools of dolphins. For the past nine years only tuna caught when no dolphins were present could be labelled as 'dolphin safe'. Now 'safe' means no dolphins were killed or injured when the fish were caught. 'These labels will simply be lying to the public,' says Mark Palmer of the Earth Island Institute, who argues dolphins snared by the nets and released may be injured and could die later. The new regulation may have little immediate impact as the manufacturers of the three biggest-selling brands of tuna in the US which control 90 per cent of the domestic market – Bumblebee, Chicken of the Sea and Star-Kist – say they will only use tuna caught by previous 'dolphin safe' methods.

New Scientist No 2186


Dolphins will have to jump nets to keep 'safe'.

ALISTAIR BERG / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

MERCENARIES

Come out of hiding

Activists seek to reveal the privatization of warfare

Mercenaries off to make matters worse.

AL VENTER / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

BRITAIN's mercenary outfits and their links with the Government should be made transparent, argues a report by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT). It states that mercenaries: 'make things worse, not better. They encourage African leaders to seek military rather than political solutions, to engage in the zero-sum, winner-takes-all approach to politics that is the root of Africa's troubles. And the solutions they offer are at best partial and short-term. Four years after Executive Outcomes' (EO) victory over UNITA – if that's what it was – the civil war rumbles on in Angola. Less than two years after EO's 1995 successes in Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) did take Freetown, in alliance with the disgruntled army, and in January 1999 they came back and burned it down. This was notwithstanding the continuing presence of Sandline [another mercenary company] and many EO personnel, not to mention the Nigerian troops. It is even suggested that mining companies jealous of the privileges enjoyed by DiamondWorks have been covertly backing the rebels. Peace and democracy have certainly not returned to Sierra Leone.

Britain's Blair Government has refused to sign the UN Convention of 1989 against mercenaries, arguing that there is little prospect of its coming into force since few have signed it. CAAT also claims that if the Government wanted to outlaw activities such as those of Sandline or EO it could use national legislation passed in 1870 which makes the recruitment of mercenaries a criminal offence.

In the US the activities of mercenaries are much more transparent than in Britain, while in South Africa a new law demands that specific approval be obtained from a designated government body before any mercenary operation is started. Perhaps due to this, EO wound up its South African operation at the end of 1998.

While arguing that mercenary activity should ultimately be stopped, CAAT urges that the British Government make all its dealings with military companies transparent; that companies be made liable for human-rights abuses or breaches of law covering war; and that mercenaries concerned with arms brokerage should come under the export licensing system. ■

***The Privatization of Violence: New Mercenaries and the State*/CAAT**

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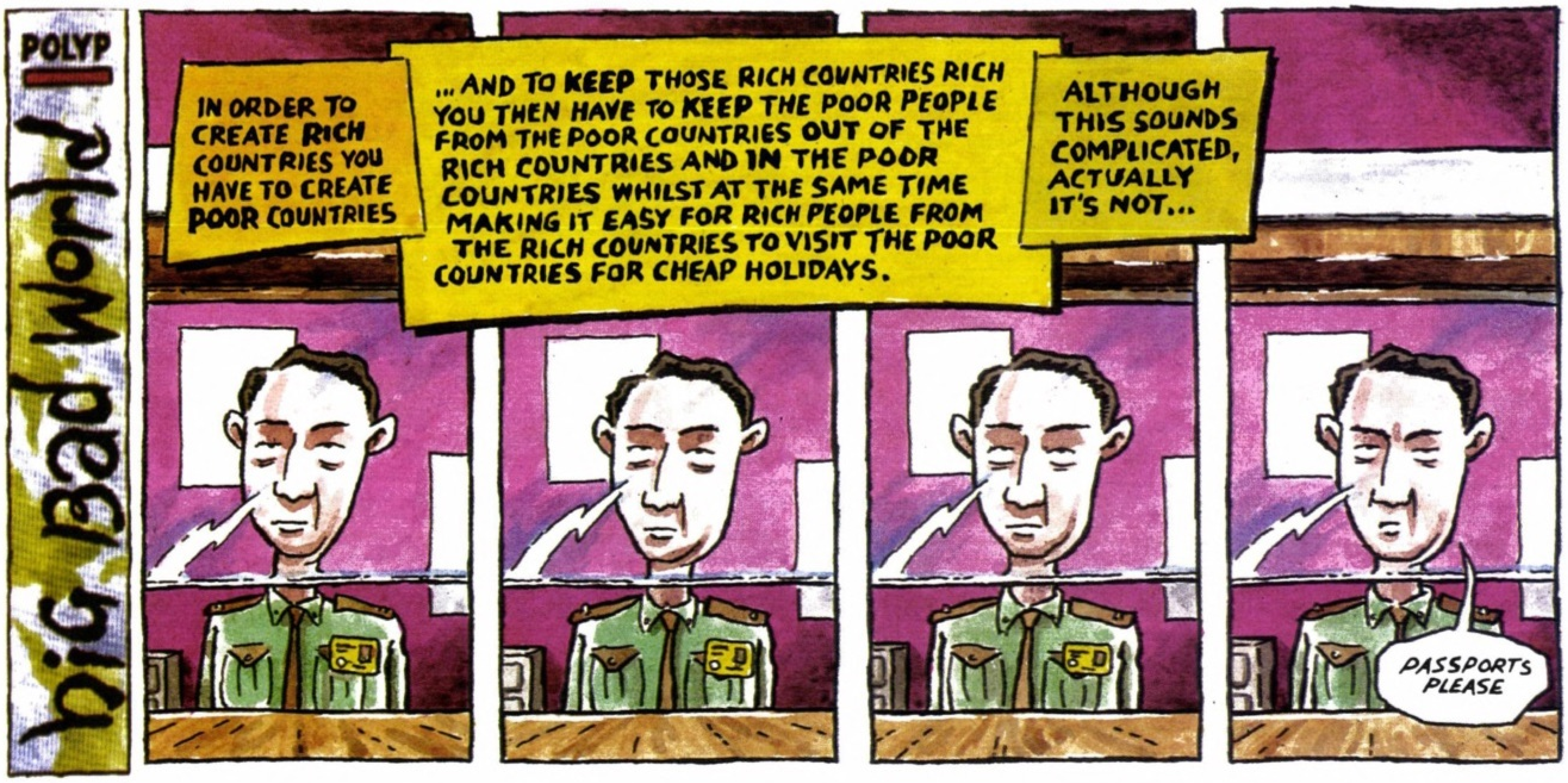
Stupid question

The Swedish International Development Agency has apologized to Sweden's African community for conducting a survey which asked whether it was 'correct', 'not quite correct' or 'not correct' that Africans are less intelligent than people in industrialized countries. Some 83 per cent answered 'not quite correct' and 10 per cent answered 'correct'.

SIDA claimed that the purpose of the question was to assess public support for development assistance. But Sweden's 50,000-strong African community saw it differently. 'The very people who should know best are giving credibility to racist opinions,' says Somalian Fatima Nur from the Stockholm County Council.

World Press Review Vol 46 No 6



POLYP
big bad World
IN ORDER TO CREATE RICH COUNTRIES YOU HAVE TO CREATE POOR COUNTRIES
...AND TO KEEP THOSE RICH COUNTRIES RICH YOU THEN HAVE TO KEEP THE POOR PEOPLE FROM THE POOR COUNTRIES OUT OF THE RICH COUNTRIES AND IN THE POOR COUNTRIES WHILST AT THE SAME TIME MAKING IT EASY FOR RICH PEOPLE FROM THE RICH COUNTRIES TO VISIT THE POOR COUNTRIES FOR CHEAP HOLIDAYS.
ALTHOUGH THIS SOUNDS COMPLICATED, ACTUALLY IT'S NOT...
PASSPORTS PLEASE

Update

BURMA

Meeting of misers

No talk of bullets in the boardroom

PREMIER Oil, the company building the Yetagun pipeline inside Burma, held a stormy AGM in London recently. The World Development Movement (WDM) and the Free Burma Campaign held a protest outside the office, next to queuing shareholders waiting for entry. Many protesters had also bought shares in the company so they could attend the meeting. These included John Jackson of the Free Burma Campaign, Yvette Mahon of WDM and journalist John Pilger.

Burmese refugees find no sympathy from Premier Oil.

DEAN CHAPMAN / PANOS PICTURES

Other 'regular' shareholders were also up in arms. Not about human rights of course but about the current share price of Premier, 16.5 pence (26 cents). Many people had bought shares when the price was as high as 92 pence ($1.52), even higher, and had seen the value of their investment plummet. Shareholder Roland Shaw spoke of his disgust at the drop in share price. He spoke at the meeting for around 3 million shares. If bought at 92 pence Mr Shaw and the two proxy shareholders whom he spoke for have lost around £22.8 million ($36.5 million). Not what one would call a great investment.

There was also consternation that the entire board only owned around £200,000 ($320,000) in shares between them, that the recruitment of John Van der Welle to Premier's board had allowed him an unfair amount of share options and that the directors were paid a bonus on oil reserves and not sales. The board rejected all the shareholders' accusations and innuendo. When it was revealed that a member of the board was earning £8,000 ($12,800) a week slight gasps were heard across the hall. Moreover, when the point was made that any sacked directors of Premier are allowed 24 months' notice it nearly brought the ornate roofing down. One shareholder drew a parallel between these privileged working conditions and his own less fortunate situation. This drew laughter and applause. The board claimed that in order to attract the right calibre of people such conditions had to be part of their recruitment. Premier also, not surprisingly, rebuffed any questions about whether it was aiding, ignoring or encouraging any human-rights abuses by the junta. Many questions were levelled at the board, many were met with stony silence by the rest of the shareholders but there were calls of 'objection' and tuts and moans from various people present. Obviously the subject of human rights inside Burma was getting in the way of their missing money and was not appreciated.

Outside one shareholder named George in his 'late seventies' complained that 'it is too easy for these people to protest here… they are probably all on benefits anyway'. He then added that the protesters, only a handful of whom were actually Burmese, should 'go back where they came from. They should go back and change their government. Even Joe Stalin couldn't shoot them all, could he?' ■

Adam Porter

Pregnant and penniless

The US is one of only six nations (from a total of 152 surveyed) that has no legal requirement for maternity leave, according to the International Labour Organization. 'Yes, we don't burn brides or practise genital mutilation,' says Ellen Bravo of the National Association for Working Women, 'but when I see that countries like South Africa are progressive enough to offer three months' paid maternity leave, and we're not, I'm certainly not proud.' More than 70 countries surveyed offer paid benefits through their government's social security systems. Under current US law women are entitled to 12 weeks' leave without pay. But for many this is unaffordable and adds stress to the adjustment of having a new child. Heidi Hartmann from the Institute for Women's Policy Research says: 'We need to protect these breadwinners while they take the time they need for childbirth.'

International Labour Organization/all quotes from *Glamour* May 1999

FERRY / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

BAMBERGER / FRANK SPOONER PICTURES

Legal rights, social wrongs

Senegal has been applauded by international organizations including UNICEF for passing legislation banning female genital mutilation (FGM). But there has been a backlash against the legislation from many traditional leaders, especially in northern Senegal. Women from 31 villages travelled to Dakar to explain why making FGM a crime at this time would not help abolish the practice. Many say the law is viewed as having been dictated by 'outside' forces such as aid organizations and Northern governments rather than being presented for local debate. Opponents of the new law also argue that education is a better strategy than criminalization.

The World Health Organization estimates that 130 million women and girls in 28 African countries have been subjected to female genital mutilation. Every year more than two million females ranging from infants a few days old to mature women undergo the procedure. Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan account for 75 per cent of cases.

Go Between No 74

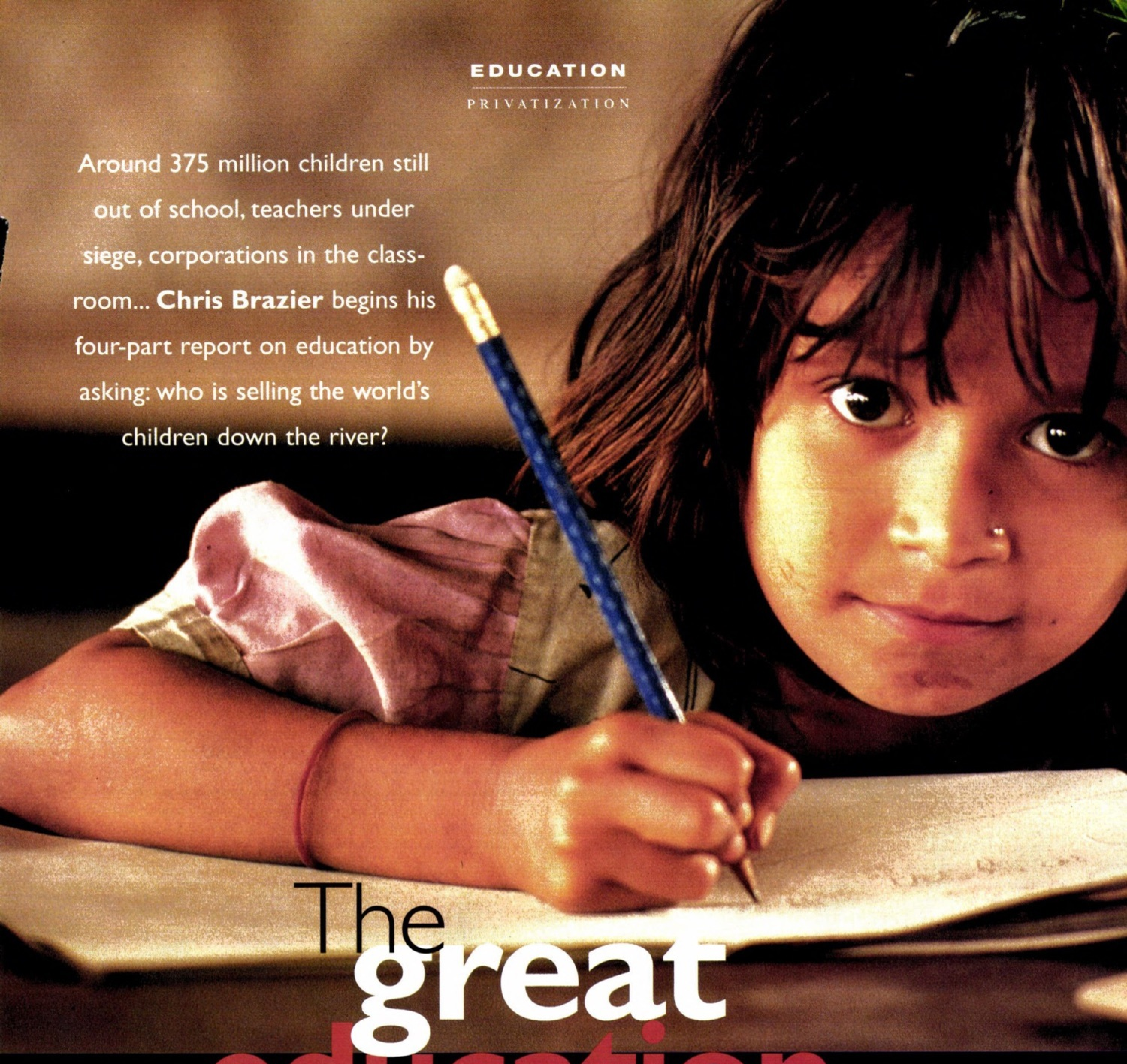
Crying shame

A South African mine worker, whose health has been ruined by exposure to asbestos, has decried his treatment by the British company Cape plc. Cupido Adams' wife died of asbestosis and he currently suffers from it. He says workers were never told of the dangers of working at the mine, which closed in 1979. And the site is still so dangerous that doctors are unwilling to go there and treat those affected by the dust in the air and on the ground around the mine. Adams addressed shareholders and company directors at Cape's general meeting asking: 'I have come all the way from South Africa to ask you why you will not hear my case in court here?' He is one of over 2,000 people who have lodged a legal claim against Cape plc. For more information contact: Action for Southern Africa, 28 Penton St, London N1 9SA, England. Tel: +44 171 833 3133. Fax: +44 171 833 3133 e-mail: actsa@geo2.poptel.org.uk

Quote

'Employment is the new name for peace'

Colombian President
André Pastrana Arrango.



SHEHZAD NOORANI/STILL PICTURES

Around 375 million children still out of school, teachers under siege, corporations in the classroom... **Chris Brazier** begins his four-part report on education by asking: who is selling the world's children down the river?

The great education scandal

THE child looks inquiringly up from her work, eyes bright, wide open to the message of the teacher. The image is a classic one that never fails to appeal. Send a photographer to capture the everyday life of a community in any part of the world and they will unerringly home in on a schoolroom and, whether it is stocked to the nines with computers or has no facilities at all, will take photos of children learning. They do this because they know there is a market for such images – we have an apparently insatiable thirst for these snapshots of hope and human improvement.

At the end of a century, let alone a millennium, the demand for such images is all the greater, since children inevitably become a touchstone for our hope that the future will not contain as many mistakes and wrong turnings as the past. So it is no surprise that in this last decade of the century, the political profile of education issues has steadily climbed.

When British Prime Minister Tony Blair was campaigning for election in 1997, he said famously that he had three top priorities: 'Education, Education and Education'. Brazilian President Fernando Enrique Cardoso's spindoctors are clearly in the same class as Blair's: when he took office in January

Sez you. Tony Blair explains to a young fan in a London primary why he did not send his own son to the local state school. The schoolgirl on the previous page is from Dhaka, Bangladesh.

JOANNE O'BRIEN/FORMAT

1995, one of his first acts was to demonstrate that education was his top priority by teaching the first class of the year at the Jose Barbosa School in Bahia state. Meanwhile no Bill Clinton State of the Union address would be complete without a section on 'raising standards' in education.

They are by no means alone in their rhetorical fervour. Back in 1990 the world's governments met at Jomtien in Thailand and, urged on by three UN agencies and the World Bank, committed themselves to the goal of 'Education for All' by the year 2000.

Yet here we are, a few months from the twenty-first century, with 125 million of the world's children still deprived of any schooling, another 150 million who drop out of school without learning to read and write and the absolute number of illiterate adults still growing. All over the world, teachers' morale is low: they are overworked, under siege and, in many areas, leaving the profession in droves. For all the high-profile political pronouncements, public funds are steadily being drained from education. The state is – slowly but surely in some quarters, with rampant enthusiasm for privatization in others – withdrawing from the field.

What the hell is going on? How can there be such dissonance between what we claim to aspire to and what is actually delivered? Put more challengingly: Who Is Selling the World's Children Down the River?

Hijacked by education

This issue of the **NI** is an attempt to find out. Until recently I had no special interest in education; it was always one of those subjects that I cared about in the abstract, but the details and controversies of which rather passed me by. My knowledge of schools was based almost entirely on my own experience as a pupil in the 1960s and 1970s.

Predictably enough, I began to take more interest when a child of my own started school some five years ago – actually in a multicultural school in inner-city Toronto. When we returned to England, my partner launched into a career change that was to result in her teaching in a high school with a particularly difficult catchment area, full of 'classic' problems of poverty and social alienation. Meanwhile my children went to the local school, SS Mary and John in East Oxford. Eventually, hoping to do what I could to help and improve it, I joined its governing body – in England, as in ever-increasing numbers of countries, the responsibility for overseeing schools has been largely devolved to such bodies of volunteers. This turned out to be more of a commitment than I had bargained for – I am now chair of governors, a post which, as you might imagine, people do not exactly clamour to take on.

Then, last year, I was commissioned by UNICEF to research and write a report on education worldwide. By the end of the contract I knew more than I will probably ever wish to know again about, say, how a project in Alice Springs which teaches Aboriginal children in their own language, Arrernte, has inspired teachers working with ethnic minorities in the hills of Vietnam.

In other words, my whole life suddenly seems to have been hijacked by education. This issue of the **NI** tries to take advantage of that by using my experience helping to run an inner-city multicultural school in the rich world – while at the same time harnessing the detailed knowledge of education in developing countries that I picked up while working for UNICEF. These two worlds actually fit together in many different places. I was fascinated, while researching the UNICEF report, to discover that many of the educational issues that we are wrestling with at grassroots level in Britain, far from being the result of one government's idiocy or intransigence, are actually the local playing-out of international trends.

Take the very practice of 'local management of schools' which has left me, a volunteer with no expertise or relevant experience, with the overall responsibility for managing the finances and hiring or firing staff at my children's school. Britain was one of the first countries to start off down this road, driven by the reforming zeal of Margaret Thatcher, whose desire for greater national control of the curriculum and whose belief in 'parent power' led her to attack local education authorities from both sides.

Decentralization is now a worldwide phenomenon, with countries simply at different points down the same long-term road. Some are only just beginning: the Philippines, for example, has long had a highly centralized system in which schools had no control over the appointment of teachers, and is only now experimenting with loosening the reins. Others, like the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, are in the vanguard, devolving more and more power from the centre to local school boards.

Save bucks and pass the buck

But is this a good thing? Decentralization is one of those concepts which can mean all things to all people. Viewed from the Left it could be seen as taking power away from the mighty – or alternatively as privatization by the back door. Those on the Right might praise it as allowing more parental choice and less power for generally liberal education specialists – or they might oppose it as a threat to national standards and culture.

My own initial presumption was that it was unlikely to be for the best: it was, after all, introduced in Britain by a right-wing government whose initiatives had generally to be treated with suspicion by anyone with social justice and human development at heart. And certainly part of me still considers that placing the responsibility for running schools on the shoulders of volunteers is unreasonable: there have been times, most notably when the school was between headteachers and I was responsible for recruiting a new one, when my main job seemed to be at the school rather than at the *New Internationalist*. At such times I am likely to conclude that 'local management of schools' is all about the State getting the necessary management work done by volunteers instead of by experts for whose skills it would have to pay a decent whack.

Yet the evidence is by no means all on one side. Take an extreme example to make the point. In Venezuela until recently a teacher in a rural primary school, who wished to attend the funeral of a relative, would have to ask permission not of her headteacher or local school board but of the national Ministry of Education, far away in the capital, Caracas. Her plea was dealt with by bureaucrats who had never met her, never seen her school and had no idea what provision might be made to cover her absence.

Clearly this high degree of centralization is absurd: schools have to be able to function with a degree of autonomy and flexibility which allows them to understand and respond to the children they cater for, the teachers who work for them and the communities they serve. The power to make key decisions has to be passed sufficiently far down the system to make this possible. The UNICEF report I worked on concluded in the end: 'decentralization becomes most dynamic when control of schools is redistributed, concentrating power not entirely in the hands of headteachers but involving the community in management through creation of a governing body with membership drawn from parents, teachers and the wider community'. In other words, pretty much the model that operates at my local school.

Successful examples of decentralized schooling are appearing all over the world. In El Salvador, for instance, giving rural communities control over their schools has not only brought education to tens of thousands of children who were previously denied it but has also improved teaching and results.[1] Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia, school clusters which share resources, materials and ideas have been a runaway success. In Cambodia, 20 of these were introduced as an experiment in 1993 and have proved so popular that the system has since been expanded to include 631 clusters nationwide. Knowing that cluster schools tend to have better teachers and equipment as well as newer buildings, parents are moving from their home villages into cluster catchment areas, voting with their feet in a fascinating parallel with those well-off parents in the cities of the rich world who decamp to suburban or rural schools.

I guess it is true that vesting power over a school in a group of parents, teachers and interested locals gives a community more chance of contact and control. Even at my brow-furrowed grumpiest I am presumably still easier for a parent to approach about a problem than would have been an unknown education officer somewhere deep in the recesses of the town hall. I can act as a conduit for feedback or encourage the headteacher in a particular direction.

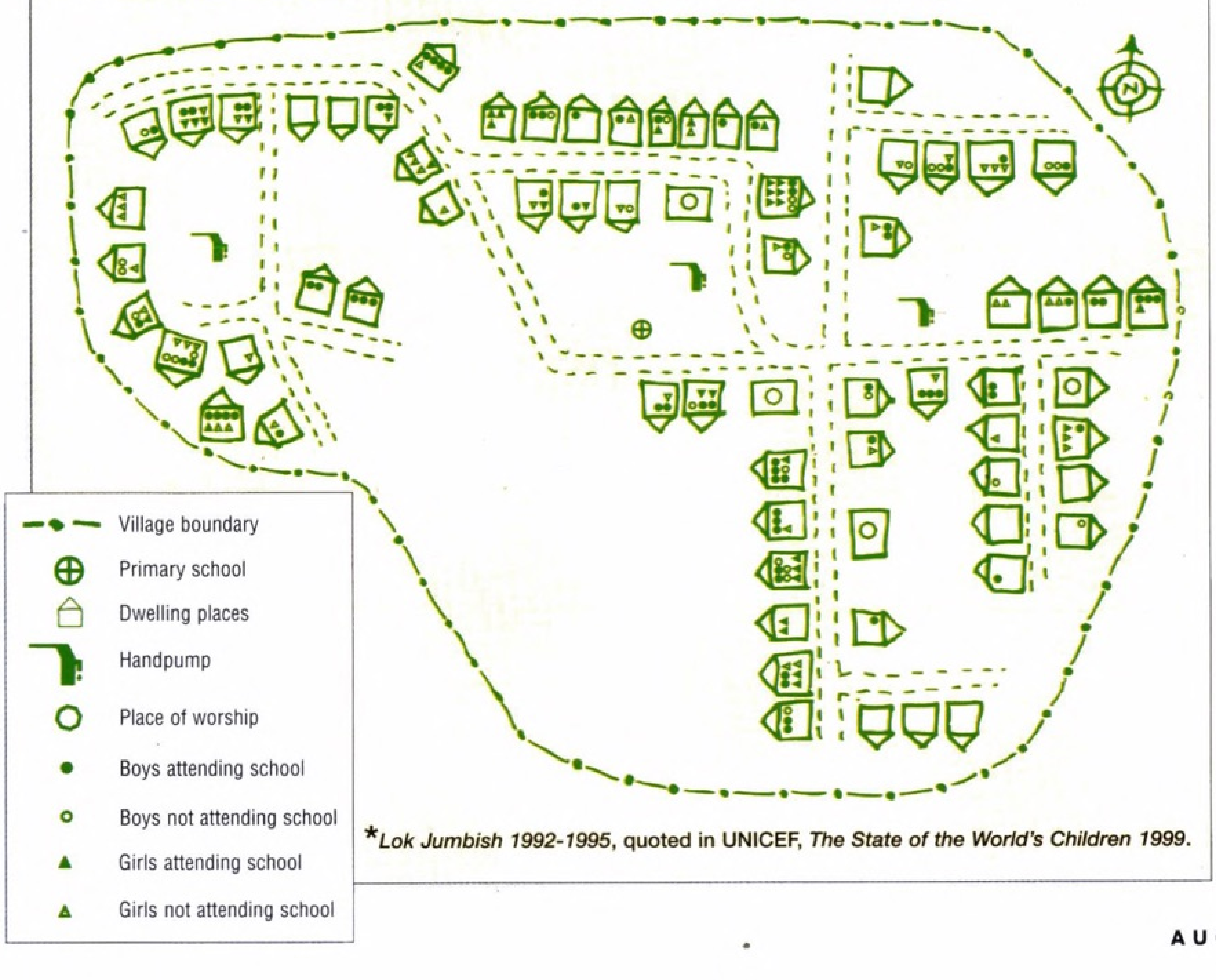
A school should be at the hub of its local community, capable of responding to its needs. And in agricultural communities in the South, these needs may well require a school's timetable to be flexible enough to allow children to participate in the harvest.

The advantages of giving local communities more influence over schools seem clear, then. But for all that, the whole notion of decentralization remains problematic – and for reasons that relate directly to my original suspicion of it in the British context as a Thatcherite project. The international studies that endorse the value of community management of education are just as clear that it can only really work well if it is funded properly. At its best, decentralization is likely to require more careful planning, more expensive training, more extensive data collection – even more staff and resources. It should be undertaken not as the cheap option but as the best.[2]

> ***All over the rich world, breeding fast in the febrile climate of free-market faith, advocates of privatized education are crawling out of the woodwork***

Handpumps and homes

This map was created by a team from a village in Rajasthan in India. Part of the Lok Jumbish ('people's movement') project, the point of such mapping is to show where girls and boys are not attending school – and to involve the local community in thinking about why. Their ideas are infinitely more likely to be accurate than those of an education official far away in the city.*



**Lok Jumbish 1992-1995*, quoted in UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1999.*

And in a climate of rampant globalization, that is all too rarely the case – especially when so many governments are being forced under the terms of new loans from the IMF to privatize ever more of their functions. Decentralization is being seen by finance ministries all over the world as an opportunity both to save bucks and to pass the buck.

I have seen this process of creeping privatization happening before my very eyes at my local school. Every year since I became a governor setting the budget has been a painful process. I am still waiting for the day when we can say 'We have this sum of money; how can we use it to improve things?' Instead every year there is the same agony of budget cuts – and the change from Conservative to New Labour governments at national level has made not a jot of difference. In 1993-94 we had the equivalent of 11 full-time teachers. Now, having just had to cut yet another teaching post, we are down to eight, with the inevitable effect that has on class sizes. Whereas five years ago parents were asked to raise money for special events – cultural outings, visits by theatre groups – now they are asked to buy books and computers. If current trends continue, it is inevitable that parents are going to be asked to make a regular monthly contribution to keeping the school going. A recent survey by the *Sunday Times* newspaper showed that seven in ten of British schools contacted were raising money from parents in this way, often directly funding teachers' or classroom assistants' pay directly.

It is a small step from this to class apartheid. It doesn't take an expert to recognize that a school in a middle-class area will have more resources to call on than one on a deprived housing estate, whether it is in Auckland or in Rio de Janeiro. Schools in comfortable suburban settings will sail blithely into the sunshine while those in the inner

Beyond the pale. Brothers Sagi and Obri outside South Africa's financial centre, Johannesburg. Private corporations never solve the educational problems of the poor.

CLIVE SHIRLEY/PANOS PICTURES

cities will sink even deeper into the hole.

Of course, for some people this is not a horrifying prospect: it is their whole life's work, a paradise of 'free parental choice'. All over the rich world, breeding fast in the febrile climate of globalization and free-market faith, advocates of privatized education are crawling out of the woodwork. In Sydney, for example, the Australian Council of Educational Research conference was told last year that public and private schools should be merged into a single system with most parents forced to pay fees. As you might expect, though, the greatest enthusiasm comes from the United States.

In 1993 the last *New Internationalist* issue on education carried a fascinating article by the eminent US educationist Jonathan Kozol about the threat to public education being posed by corporations such as Burger King taking over schools. He focused on plans to open 200 new profit-making schools by 1996 and to have as many as 1,000 serving two million children by early in the next decade. He argued that a radical reprivatizing of public education was on the way – and that progressive people in and outside education underestimated the power of this corporate lobby at their peril.

Vouchers would fatally undermine the whole basis of public education

Thankfully Kozol's nightmare scenario has not yet arrived. The Burger King schools loomed large in the imagination because of the sheer horror of a fast-food company hijacking children's education for profit. But the greater threat came from two businesses which launched themselves into education in the early 1990s as the outriders of a new apocalyptic free-market model.

Education Alternatives Incorporated (EAI), started by former Xerox salesperson John Golle in 1986, initially ran private schools for profit. But in the early 1990s Golle moved into the public sector, claiming he could run public schools and improve their results while still turning a healthy profit. He told *Forbes* magazine: 'There's so much fat in the schools that even a blind man without his cane could find the way'.[3]

In 1992 he was given his chance as EAI won a contract to run nine schools in Baltimore for five years – and were given 11-per-cent more money with which to do it than the regular public schools. By 1995 Baltimore had terminated the contract, explaining that not only were EAI students doing worse in reading but the company had falsified data – in one case having to repay the city $338,500 after it had claimed for non-existent students. In Hartford, Connecticut, where EAI contracted to run all 32 schools, the experiment ended in a similar debacle, as the company tried to increase profitability by sacking 300 teachers. The company still exists under the name Tesseract but is currently only running 12 schools.

Even more of a proselytizer for privately run public schools was marketing whizz Chris Whittle of The Edison Project, who announced in 1991 his plans to raise $2.5 billion from private investors to fund a new network of schools run for profit. By 1998 he had still raised no more than $161 million and had opened only 38 schools.[4]

There is no room for complacency, however. Whittle's grand design was scuppered by the election of Bill Clinton – the social and political advantages conferred upon Americans by his presidency may be few and far between, but this is one of them. Had George Bush been re-elected a nationwide system of vouchers might well have come into existence – parents would have chosen to spend their child's voucher either in a private or a public school. Opponents of vouchers may have won that particular day but the right-wing lobby for it is still alarmingly strong in the US – and the idea has advocates all over the industrialized world.

These people preach the gospel of 'choice', trying to present a voucher system as an opportunity for all. In reality, the net result would be a diversion of state funds into élitist private schools – and a huge boost to the numbers of middle-class parents opting for private education for their children. Vouchers would fatally undermine the whole basis of public education.

The clearest possible illustration of this comes from the South. Chile introduced education vouchers in 1980 as part of the Pinochet regime's radical adoption of the economist Milton Friedman's free-market policies. The country became a laboratory for extreme monetarism and the envy of right-wingers like Reagan and Thatcher. School vouchers were themselves originally Friedman's idea – he had proposed the scheme unsuccessfully in the US of the mid-1950s. But in Chile his dream came true. Private schools were subsidized by the State and competed against public schools run by local government. All students were given a voucher, though private schools had the right to refuse to accept the vouchers of children who could not afford top-up fees.

There were three main results. First, there was a huge exodus of middle-class children into private schools, so that by 1990 only half the children from the middle-income bracket were going to municipal schools. Second, total spending on education in Chile plummeted even when parental contributions were included: from 5.3 per cent of GNP in 1985 to 3.7 per cent in 1990, as the State started to feel less sense of responsibility for education in general. Third, standards of achievement dropped – especially for students from low-income families.[5]

Results like these will not be trumpeted by the right-wing advocates of vouchers, who consistently aim to push their agenda by persuading the poor, whose children are likely to be served by the most dilapidated and ill-equipped schools, that such reform could give everyone access to the promised land of private schooling. And the most effective recruiting-sergeant for this cause is not the right-wing campaign itself but the unwillingness of governments the world over to fund public education properly.

The Coca-Cola classroom

In the US, privatization via voucher schemes may be the long-term goal of the Right's siege of public education. But there is a Trojan Horse at work here too in the shape of the rampant commercialization of ordinary schools. Edison's Chris Whittle himself came to fame through his pioneering of television advertising in the classroom. His commercials for Snickers, Burger King and other companies are still seen by millions of schoolchildren in the US. In return for a satellite dish and TV sets for each classroom, schools guarantee that 90 per cent of students will watch a 12-minute ad-infested programme every day.

The latest trend is for school districts to conclude exclusive deals with Coca-Cola or Pepsi-Cola, taking money upfront for marketing the firm's products to children. Up to 1994 such deals were generally only with universities, but that year the first contract was signed with a public school district – with Shaler Area in Pennsylvania. Gradually the idea caught on and the arrangements became more elaborate until in 1998 the number of deals took off into the stratosphere (see box, *The Coke Dude*).

School districts, of course, claim they are simply gaining extra income for an underfunded education system. But quite apart from the health implications of promoting such nutritionally worthless drinks (young Americans already drink twice as much soda as milk), the deals often have significant implications for the curriculum. In March 1998, for example, Greenbriar High School in Georgia created an entire day's curriculum around Coke: chemistry classes measured the sugar content of a can; social-studies teachers lectured on Coke's markets overseas.

But even in the middle of this depressing saga, there was a glimmer of hope. At the end of the day all the school's students were dressed in red-and-white Coke T-shirts for a school photo – except that one dissident, Mike Cameron, suddenly pulled off his top to reveal a Pepsi work shirt (he was suspended for his impudence). Shame he opted to plug a rival corporation rather than debunk the whole shameful process, but resistance, it seems, is always possible.

More substantial resistance came from the 126,000 teachers and education workers in Ontario in the fall of 1997, who staged a two-week strike – the biggest political protest in North American history. The strike was a response to the full-scale onslaught of the radical right-wing Harris Government, elected in June 1995 on its promise of a 'Common Sense Revolution'.

Ultimately the teachers were defeated – and the right-wing blitzkrieg on education has continued apace ever since, implementing many of the most retrograde reforms highlighted in this magazine. Thousands of teachers have left the profession. 'Those of us who remain,' says Toronto teacher Thom Corner, 'continue to be overworked and underappreciated. Constantly vilified by the Government, we have retreated into an angry shell from which we view the Common Sense Revolution's steady progress towards a market model.'[6] To rub salt in the wound, the Harris Government was re-elected in June thanks to a split in the opposition vote.

Yet its education minister was defeated at the polls. Small crumb of comfort this may be, but it is a sign that those two weeks of resistance in which the entire school system of the province was shut down, in which 2.1 million children and their parents were confronted daily with the key issues, still loom large in the public memory. If nothing else, this landmark strike showed that far from being 'common sense', the current wave of education reforms are driven by the ideology of the Right and contested by those who know the classroom best. Ontario's teachers stood up for what they valued about public education. Sooner or later we are all going to have to do the same. ■

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1 *EDUCO Learns and Teaches*, Ministry of Education of El Salvador. **2** K Bloomer, *Decentralizing the education system*, Commonwealth Secretariat Program 1991. **3** Quoted in Barbara Miner, 'For-Profit Firms Fail to Deliver', in *Selling Out Our Schools*, Rethinking Schools 1996. **4** Website of the Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, June 1999. **5** Martin Carnoy, 'Lessons of Chile's Voucher Reform Movement', in *Selling Out Our Schools*, Rethinking Schools 1996. **6** Background paper for the **NI**, June 1999.

The Coke Dude

The following letter (which we have abridged) was sent to school principals in Colorado Springs, US, by the district executive director of 'school leadership'.

Dear Principal

Here we are in year two of the great Coke contract. I hope your first weeks were successful and that pretty much everything is in place (except staffing, technology, planning time and telephones).

First, the good news: this year's installment from Coke is 'in the house' and checks will be cut for you to pick up in my office this week.

Now the not-so-good news: we must sell 70,000 cases of product (including juices, sodas, waters etc) during the first three years of the contract.

The math on how to achieve this is really quite simple. Last year we had 32,439 students, 3,000 employees and 176 days in the school year. If 35,439 staff and students buy one Coke product every other day for a school year, we will double the required quota.

Here is how we can do it:

1. Allow students to purchase and consume vended products throughout the day. If sodas are not allowed in classes, consider allowing juices, teas and waters.

2. Locate machines where they are accessible to the students all day. Location, location, location is the key.

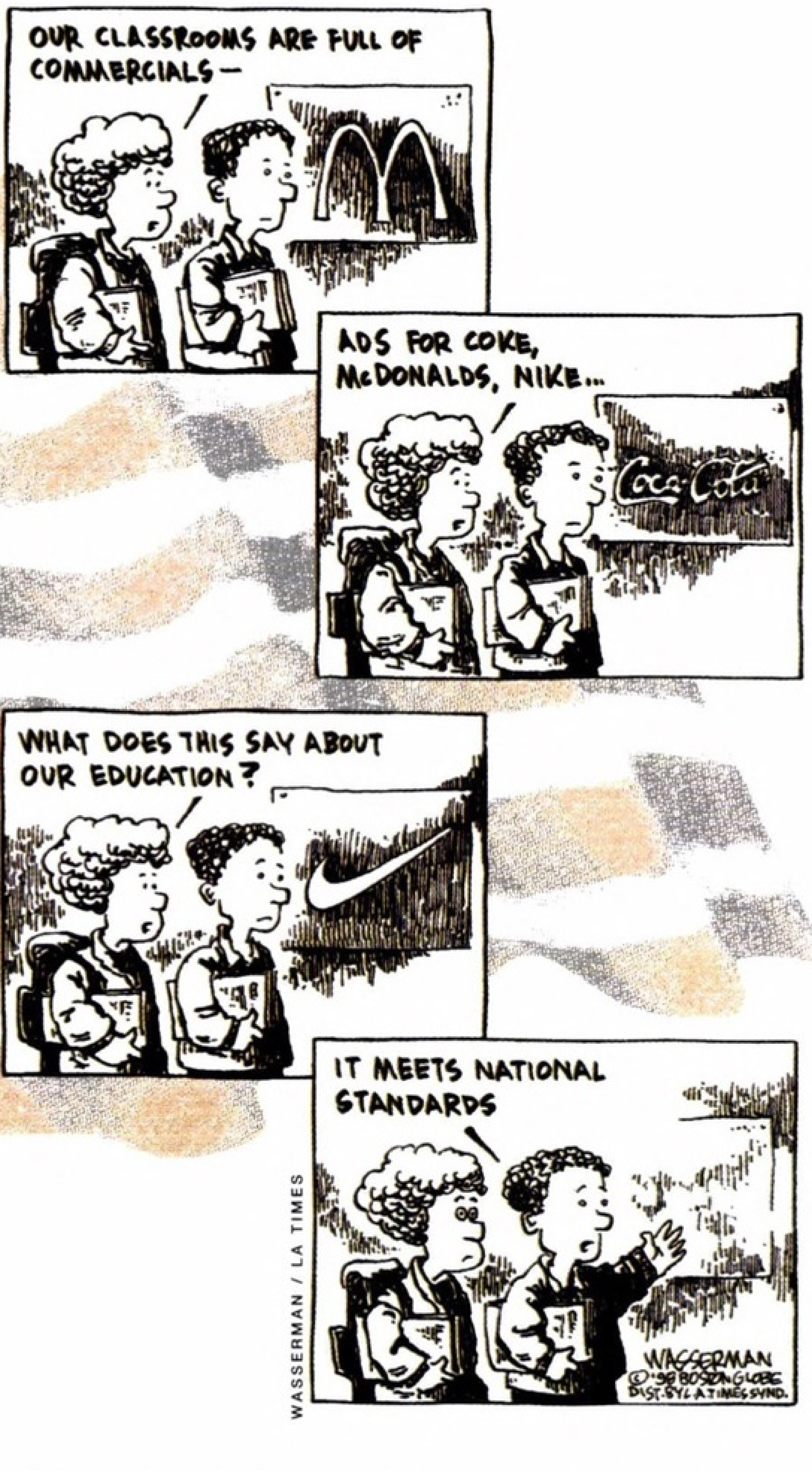
3. A list of Coke products is enclosed to allow you to select from the entire menu.

4. A calendar of promotional events is enclosed to help you advertise Coke products.

I know this is 'just one more thing from downtown', but the long-term benefits are worth it.

Thanks for all your help.

John Bushey - The Coke Dude


OUR CLASSROOMS ARE FULL OF COMMERCIALS –
ADS FOR COKE, McDONALDS, NIKE...
Coca-Cola
WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT OUR EDUCATION?
IT MEETS NATIONAL STANDARDS
WASSERMAN
©'98 BOSTON GLOBE DIST. BY LA TIMES SYND.

WASSERMAN / LA TIMES

Gender Canyon

PAUL SMITH/PANOS PICTURES

Getting girls into school in the South is literally a matter of life and death. Yet in the North it is the underachievement of boys which is causing a stir. Can 'gender-sensitive' education help on both fronts?

NOTHING gets people going so much as sexual politics. Except perhaps race. Or religion. And when the three are mixed together you get something pretty explosive. One of the hottest issues in my local elementary school in recent years has been that of gender-segregated swimming, a storm which had thankfully blown itself out by the time I became a governor. The school had its own tiny unheated swimming pool, just about big enough for children to learn their first few strokes. It also had (and still has) a fascinatingly diverse multicultural population, which includes Kenyans, Chinese, Serbs and Albanians. A consistent one-third of the school's children come from the local Muslim community; most of their families migrated originally from rural Pakistan.

To make a long story short, representatives of the Muslim community (of whom there are three on the governing body now, though there was then only one) requested that girls should swim in separate sessions to boys, saying that their children (often those least likely to learn to swim outside school) would otherwise be unable to take part. After much debate the governors eventually decided to agree to this, at which point many of the (generally liberal, feminist-sympathizing)

Light of learning. An open schoolroom in the jungles of Quiché in Guatemala.

white parents erupted in protest, finding the whole idea of sexual segregation outrageous. Those parents who felt most strongly about the issue then withdrew their children from swimming altogether. After a year or so of this, probably to everyone's relief, the pool became unsafe and the lessons stopped.

This minefield of an issue is fascinating precisely because there was no easy resolution to it – it is often too easy to endorse multicultural education in a bland way that assumes it is uncomplicated and unproblematic. But despite the complications, I think all parts of the school community – children, staff and parents – genuinely see its cultural diversity as enriching.

The first migrants to this area came when their villages near Mirpur in north-east Pakistan were submerged under the floodwaters of the new Mangla Dam in the 1960s. In those days before unemployment rose and the immigration shutters went down, the former colonial power, Britain, allowed some of those displaced to immigrate; the rest were relocated within Pakistan. In the intervening years there has been a steady influx of new Pakistani migrants to East Oxford and, while the school now has some third-generation children whose parents were born in England, the majority still enter school at five speaking only Punjabi or Urdu.

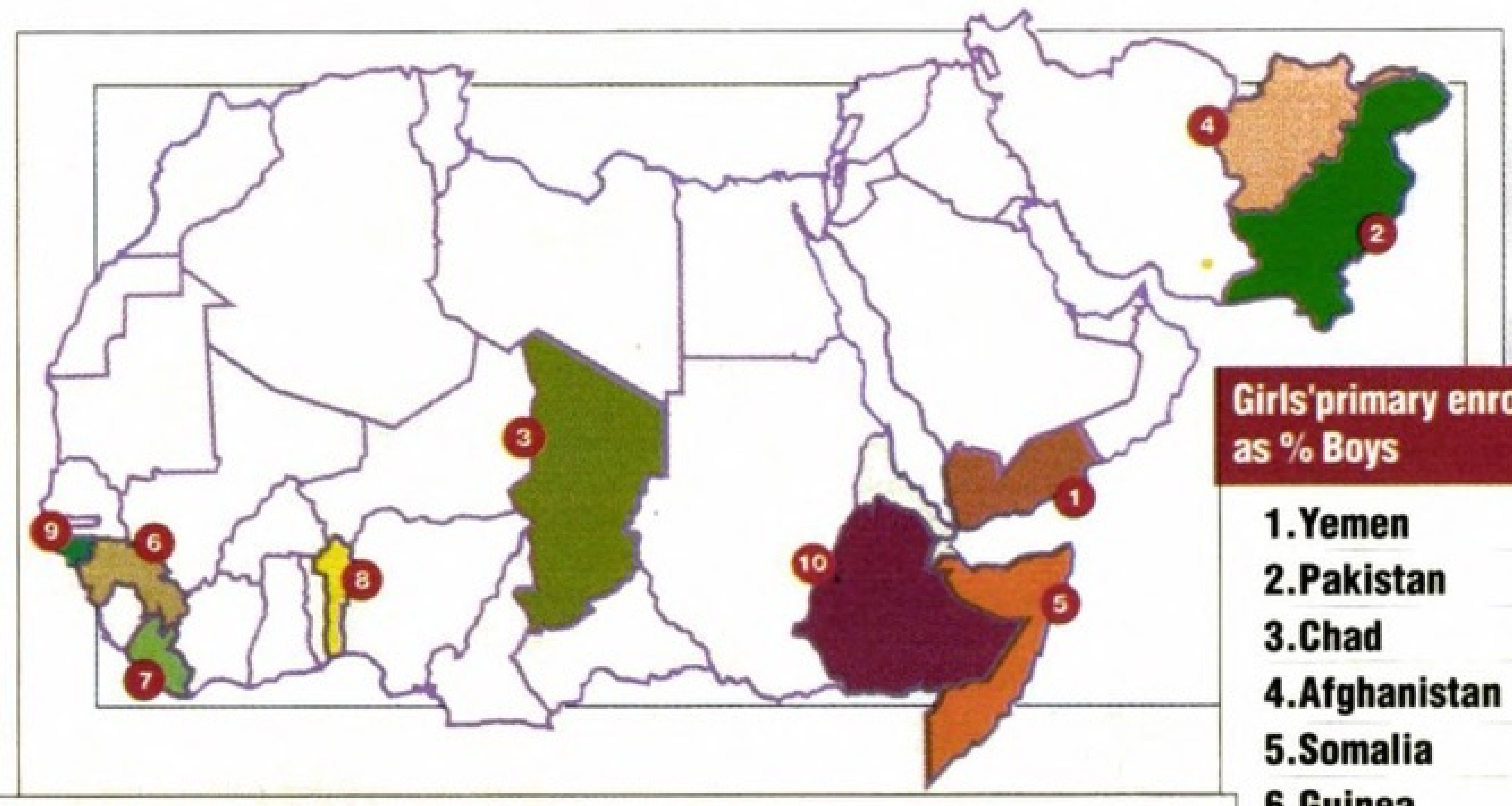
Starting at a school run in a different language is inevitably alienating, no matter how much support you are offered in your first language. But at least all have access to schooling: their cousins in rural Pakistan often miss out on education altogether, particularly the girls. Pakistan has one of the widest gender gaps in the world, and despite promising in the early 1990s to reduce this gap and make sexual equality in education a priority, its governments' efforts on this front have been dismal (see map, *Band of shame*).

By failing to achieve the goal of basic education for all children in the 1990s the world has sentenced millions of children to death

Life savers

On a worldwide level, girls continue to be denied schooling to a much greater extent than boys – fully two-thirds of the estimated 125 million children currently out of school are girls. Girls' exclusion from education is not just immoral and unjust – it is a flagrant abuse of their fundamental human rights. More strikingly, it is also a matter of life and death.

By failing to achieve the goal of basic education for all children in the 1990s the world has effectively sentenced millions of children to death. How could this be? How could education possibly save so many lives? According to the World Bank, the best available estimates show that each year of schooling that a girl receives reduces the under-five mortality rate by up to ten per cent, as more educated mothers reap the benefit of their greater understanding of health, sanitation and nutrition.[1] On this basis even just one year's schooling would have reduced infant-mortality rates sufficiently to save two million of the children these out-of-school girls will one day have – though of course 'Education for All' would have entailed many further years of schooling, each of them multiplying the number of child lives saved.



Girls'primary enrolment as % Boys

1.Yemen	40%
2.Pakistan	45%
3.Chad	49%
4.Afghanistan	50%
5.Somalia	53%
6.Guinea	54%
7.Liberia	55%
8.Benin	57%
9.Guinea Bissau	58%
10. Ethiopia	62%

Band of shame

The ten countries with the biggest gender gap in primary schooling all lie in the same strip of Africa and Western Asia.

Source: UNESCO World education report 1998

The incontrovertible case for investing in girls' education was made in a high-profile speech in Pakistan in 1992 by one Lawrence H Summers, who was then Vice-President and Chief Economist of the World Bank. As the advocate of a feminist cause he was, to put it mildly, an unlikely candidate, having gained notoriety for endorsing the dumping of toxic waste in low-wage countries. After his spell at the World Bank he joined the US Government and is now President Clinton's right hand at the Treasury.

But his speech had all the more impact in development circles because it came from a conservative economist, a World Bank clone. 'Reflecting the biases of an economist,' he said, 'I have tried to concentrate on the concrete benefits of female education and explicitly contrast it with other proposed investments. Expenditures on increasing the education of girls do not just meet the seemingly easy test of being more socially productive than military outlays. They appear to be far more productive than other social-sector outlays and than the vastly large physical capital outlays that are projected over the next decade.'[1]

So there you have it – for once the World Bank and the *New Internationalist* are in agreement. Educating girls has myriad well-established benefits, such as later marriage and fewer children, lower maternal and infant mortality rates, the passing on of education to the next generation – not to mention greater freedom from an oppressive family or social situation.

Given all this, why hasn't the world moved heaven and earth to give all girls at

Reaching for the sky: these Bella nomads near Gorom-Gorom in Burkina Faso are among the millions of African girls who need friendlier, more flexible schools.

MARK EDWARDS/STILL PICTURES

least a decent primary education by the supposed target date of the year 2000? You may well ask – and towards the end of this issue we'll try to identify the culprits.

Ruts, roadblocks, achievements

But at least mainstream acceptance of the urgent importance of girls' education has meant organizations working in this field have found the doors of the powers-that-be more open to them. One that has made particular headway is the Forum of African Women Educators (FAWE). The organization was set up in 1992 by women from across the continent who had battled against the odds to achieve not just academic success of their own but positions of power and influence in education at the national level – there were current and former ministers of education, university vice-chancellors and prominent educationists. The idea was to pool their strength and access to the levers of power to mount a cohesive campaign for girls' education at the same time as promoting that cause via practical initiatives wherever possible. FAWE now has 31 national chapters.

At one end of their activity is the idea of celebrating women's achievement: inspiring girls by example with a sense of what schooling can make possible. It gives an annual award – the Agathe Uwilingiyimana Prize, named after the late Rwandan prime minister who was herself a former teacher and FAWE member – for innovative achievements in African female education. But it also focuses on good role models at the grassroots like Priscilla Naisula Nangurai, a headteacher in Maasailand, Kenya, who has worked particularly hard to resist family pressures for girls to drop out of school. 'Getting girls into school,' she says, 'is merely the first step on a long rugged road which is filled with ruts and roadblocks – some cultural, others economic'.[2]

But FAWE is also working to improve the situation on a more structural level, collaborating with a team from the Institute of Development Studies in England on a major new girls' education programme called Gender and Primary Schooling in Africa (GAPS). The aim is to analyze the practical needs and cultural circumstances of individual African countries and design a reform programme that will deliver schooling for all within 15 years. In Ethiopia, for example, the reform proposals chart a route by which the country might get all children enrolled in primary school within 15 years – and given that Ethiopia currently manages to educate fewer of its children than any country in the world bar Somalia and Niger (39 per cent of boys and 24 per cent of girls) that would be a pretty impressive result.[3]

In Ethiopia among the key reforms proposed are increased spending on learning materials, higher wages for teachers and subsidizing stationery and clothing costs for rural girls. But what is aimed at in general is a *gender-sensitive* model of education.

Up until the 1990s education in the Third World was almost always seen in terms of 'bottoms on seats'. There wasn't enough schooling to cope with all the children who needed it, so what you had to do was to provide more. But more of the same is often not good enough, as child labourers have proved the world over by voting with their feet – like Assane, a 10-year-old shoeshine boy from Senegal, who memorably told this magazine in 1997: 'I don't need to go to school. What can I learn there? I know children who went to school. Their family paid for the fees and the uniforms and now they are educated. But you see them sitting around. Now they are useless to their families. They don't know anything about farming or trading or making money... If anyone tries to put me in school I will run away.'[4]

The friendly classroom

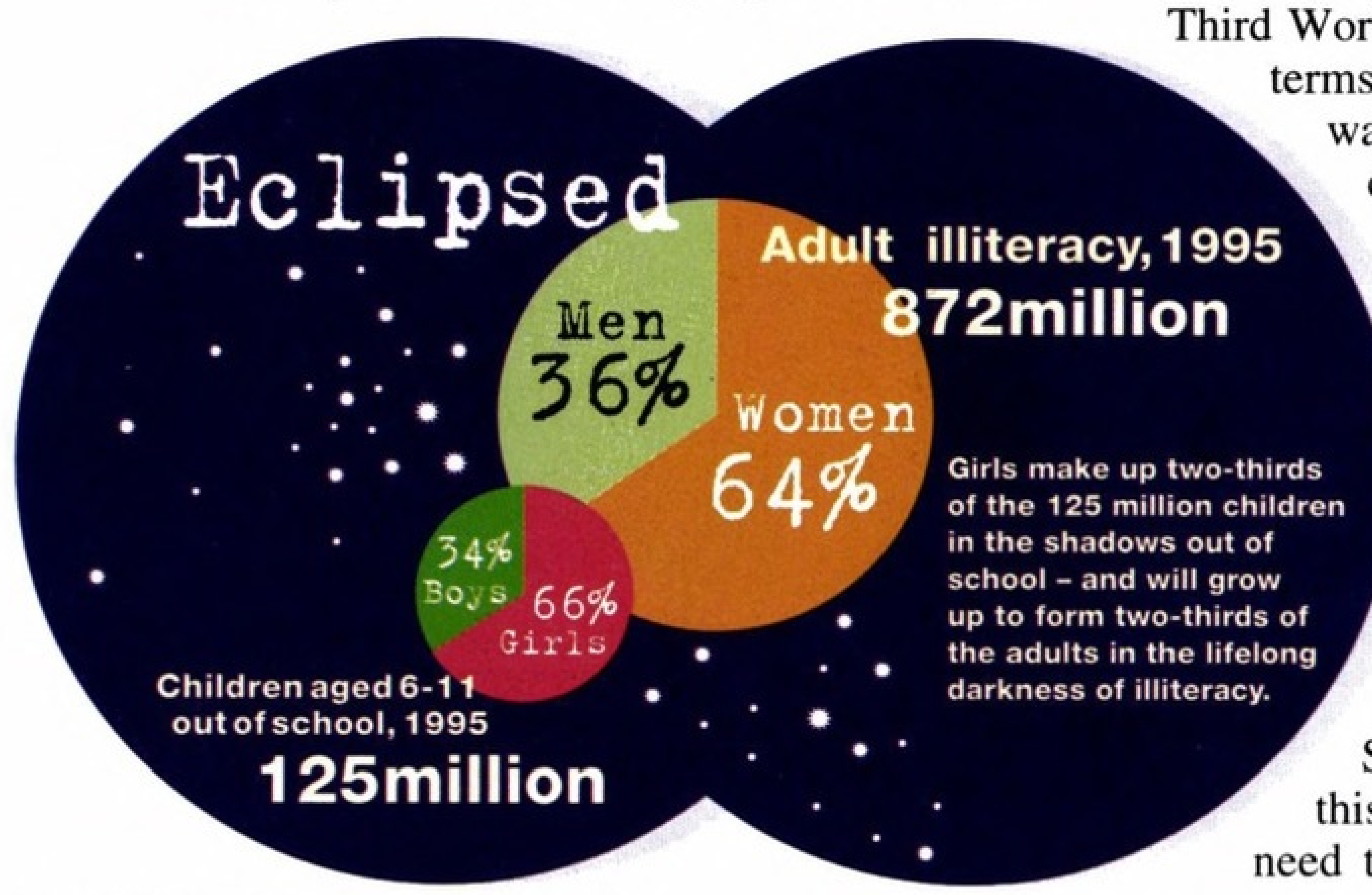
It is no good simply opening the doors of a classroom and expecting the desperate multitudes to pour in: like Assane, many children will have good reasons for scorning what passes for education in school.

The same principle applies in girls' education. You can't simply carry on in exactly the same way and expect equal numbers of girls to take their allotted place in class. Instead you have to look at all the myriad reasons why girls have not been coming to school and be prepared to modify everything from the education system to the method of teaching.

So what does gender-sensitive education actually mean? In practice most reforms undertaken in the name of improving quality and child rights will also make education more gender-sensitive. In that sense making schools more girl-friendly in, say, Mauritania, will also make them more boy-friendly. Some of the key measures are:

◆ Making the classroom experience child-centred, relevant to the local community and in the local language.

◆ Training teachers to be more sensitive to gender issues. In many areas of the South more women teachers are needed, who can



Source: Education Now, *Oxfam International 1999.*

act as role models for girl students.

- Locating schools closer to children's homes: this makes schooling more accessible to all children but particularly encourages girls (and their families) to enrol. In Egypt if a school is one kilometre instead of two kilometres away, enrolment goes up 4 per cent for boys but 18 per cent for girls.[5]
- Providing decent early-childhood-care schemes. All children benefit from this kind of preschool care and stimulation, but girls' staying-power in primary school seems to be increased by it even more than boys'.
- Scheduling lessons flexibly to help children expected to work for the family in the fields or the home.
- Making education available free or at very low cost. In poor families where a choice has to be made between sons and daughters going to school it is the girls who usually lose out.
- Involving the local community.
- Ensuring that schools are safe places, with clean water and latrines.
- Rooting out gender bias from textbooks and materials. Given that biased examples tend to show males in positions of activity and authority, this might superficially seem like a reform detrimental to boys. In reality boys also benefit when they are encouraged to make choices based on who they are rather than on who society expects them to be.

Even when a country has managed to offer a primary-school place to all boys and girls, however, as is broadly the case now in East Asia and Latin America as well as in the industrialized world, the need for gender-sensitive education by no means disappears. Girls can find it even harder to make it into secondary school than they did to get through the door in the first place. Yet dropping out at this point can be disastrous. In some parts of Thailand, for example, it is particularly vital that girls make it across the precarious bridge from primary to secondary school because it is at this point, as they enter adolescence, that they are most vulnerable to being recruited – or even abducted – by agents for the sex industry.

Another risk at this age is early pregnancy, which in many countries causes girls to be automatically expelled from school. An innovative project in Botswana has established a daycare centre alongside a junior secondary school. Pregnant girls receive three months' maternity leave during which they keep in touch via extension courses; they then return to school and have their baby looked after. In

A quiet escape

Girls in rural Pakistan have a slim chance of schooling. But Charlotte Carlsson unearths a small success story in the wilderness.

‘If nothing else it'll make it easier to get her married,' he says, taking me behind a wall of dried cow-dung and straw surrounding the family compound. ‘But I hope she will become a teacher.' Manzoor, a thin, tall man with sunken eyes is commenting on his daughter's education as we pass some cattle, outstretched in the scorching afternoon sun, on our way towards the women's quarters.

As is usual in rural Pakistani families, 11-year-old Zerina (pictured below) is busy looking after her younger brothers and sisters. Unlike most girls in Sindh province, however, she will not go through life uneducated. ‘I go to school in the mornings and help my mother around the house in the afternoons,' she says, putting her younger brother Waseem down on the dirt floor. ‘I'm the only one in our family who can read so far,' she adds, pride reflected in her big brown eyes.

Zerina is lucky. Only around ten per cent of women in the province can read or write and fathers are usually reluctant to send their daughters to school. A child whose mother has a say in education decisions is much more likely to go to school. In nearly 80 per cent of the cases, however, the father is the sole decision-maker. The gender gap here is alarmingly wide: 70 per cent of boys go to school compared to 45 per cent of girls, and even then girls are 40-per-cent more likely to drop out.

The story in Zerina's home village of Pakkho is different only because the local community has taken it into its own hands to provide its children with education. In the mornings, Zerina is one of 150 bouncy students crowded into a small open space part covered with a makeshift wooden roof. There is little shade here during the unbearably hot summers. There are no toilets, drinking water or electricity.

Yet Rabia Begum, teacher here for two decades, shows me around proudly. ‘The community makes the space available. If we had waited for government support, we would have nothing,' she says. ‘Most parents like to send their daughters here. Two of our students are now primary teachers themselves,' she continues, pointing towards Amra and Zeenat-un-Nissa.

The Pakkho school gives the lie to the argument that poverty is the main explanation for the gender gap. This is unmistakably a poor farming area yet despite the ramshackle condition of the school, it is well attended and has the community's support.

In sharp contrast, the school in Laiqpur, on the other side of Sindh province, was built with an investment of $24,000 from the World Bank. It has functioning latrines, running water, desks and teaching materials. But something is missing — female students. Only nine girls have enrolled. ‘We travel for two hours to get here and back every day just to face empty desks,' says Shahida Mehmood, one of the Laiqpur teachers.

The lesson here is that resources tend to find their way into the channels that suit the powers-that-be. Powerful landowners and politicians in Pakistan have their own ways of getting schools built in their home communities regardless of need. A few families still hold quasi-feudal power over entire villages, controlling everything from food to basic services. In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that it is virtually unheard of for people to vote against the local landowners in elections.

Farzana Saleem, Director of Women's Development in the Sindh provincial government, believes that to even out this type of inequity, public spending has to be more accountable and transparent. Today, less than five per cent of the Sindh provincial government budget is allocated to education. Half of the budget goes to debt servicing and 40 per cent to defence, leaving little for sectors such as health and education.

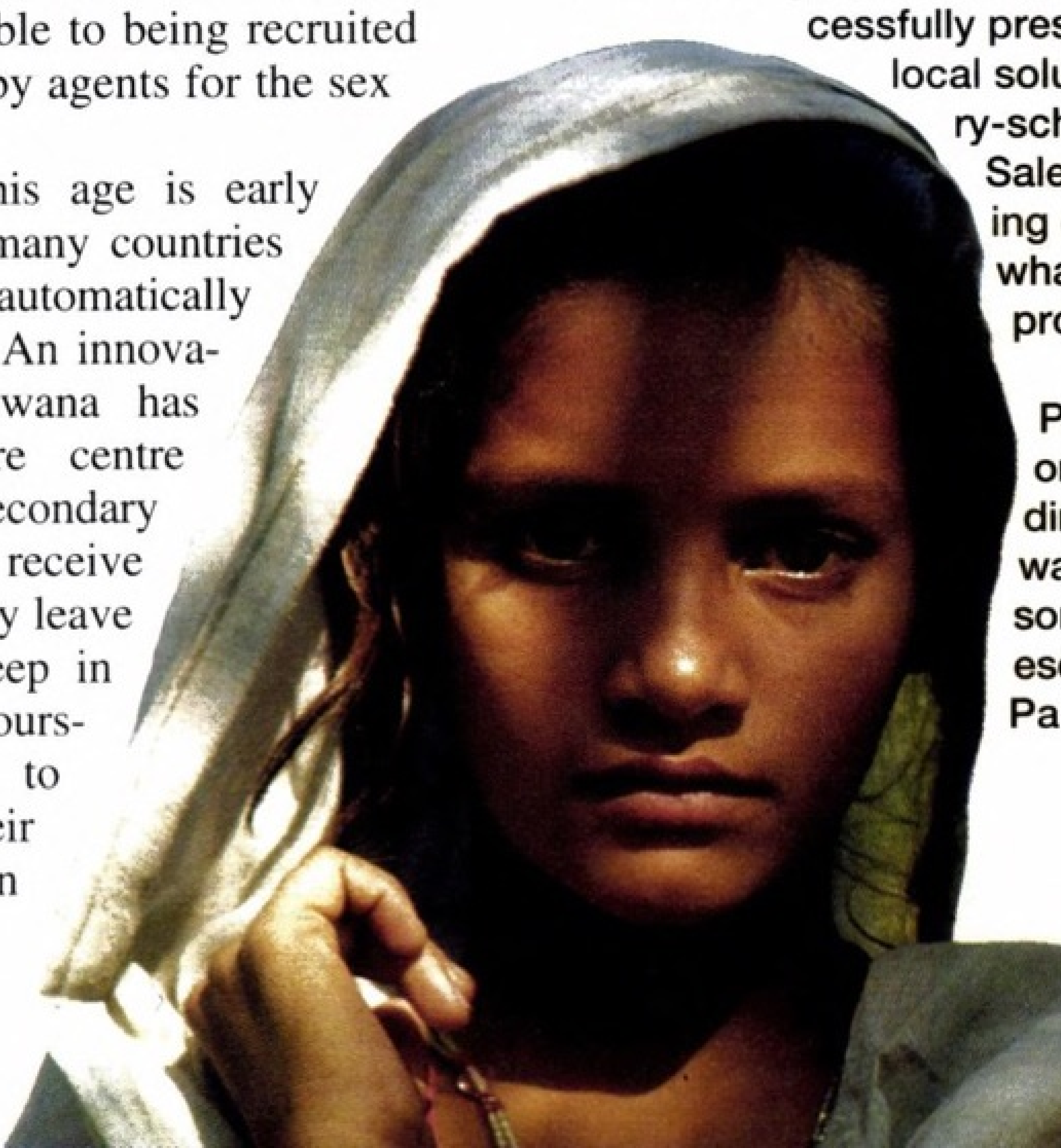
‘We can't afford this waste,' says Saleem. ‘You cannot make a three-piece suit out of a small piece of cloth. But with the right techniques you can make a good jacket,' she adds with a smile.

The ‘small piece of cloth' is an effective metaphor for education spending in Pakistan as a whole, which notoriously spends twice as much on defence as on education and health put together. Enrolment rates for girls are the lowest in the world bar Yemen.

A new study released in December 1998 suggested that communities could successfully press government officials for more support by suggesting local solutions. But with a national average of 55 per cent of primary-school-age girls still with no chance of schooling, Farzana Saleem is not optimistic. ‘We can make a dent by encouraging communities to find their own solutions. But ultimately what is needed is the political will to back the Government's promises,' she says.

Until the Government delivers, success stories like that in Pakkho are likely to be few and far between, dependent on one community's particular resolve. For Zerina, though, the dirt floor and supportive surroundings are a huge step forward. ‘I like school,' she says. ‘The teachers are nice and it's something different from the household work.' Zerina has escaped the gender trap but for all too many girls like her in Pakistan there is still no way out. ■

Charlotte Carlsson is a photojournalist based in Brussels, Belgium.



CHARLOTTE CARLSSON

Gurl

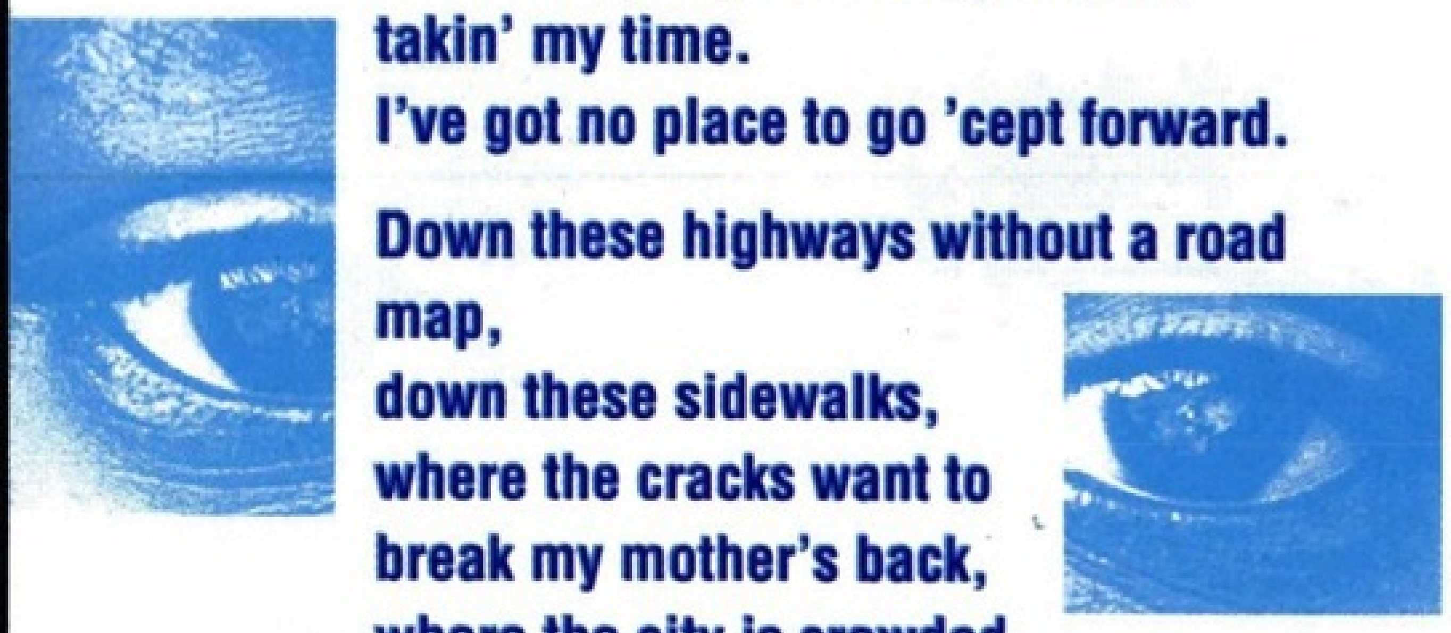
From Adam's rib
it's prophesied
I came,
but that's his story

I'm walking on my own
down these streets
with a stop sign on every corner,
takin' my time.
I've got no place to go 'cept forward.

Down these highways without a road
map,
down these sidewalks,
where the cracks want to
break my mother's back,
where the city is crowded.
I'm walking on my own.

I'm not on a Stairmaster,
and I won't wait for an elevator.
I'm taking the fire escape
to the top floor.

If I want to,
I'll walk all around the world,
taking the long way
or the shortcuts,
'cross countries and through
oceans.
I won't be swimming.
I'll walk
on my own.



Mary Blalock, who was a high-school student in Portland, Oregon, when she wrote this poem.

ERIC L WHEATER

return they work for a few hours a week in the daycare centre, which doubles as a living classroom teaching parenting and life skills to both male and female students. Meanwhile a popular campaign has forced Botswana's government to allow pregnant students to take exams and be re-admitted to their original school.[5]

Boys in trouble

What are the implications of the 'gender-sensitive' classroom for the rich world? Here, as the 1990s have unfolded, a different kind of gender divide has emerged into the light – that between the majority of the world's countries, where the primary problem remains girls' exclusion from school and the opportunities it affords, and the minority where girls are markedly outperforming boys.

In the industrialized countries it is only fairly recently that boys' underperformance has become a major concern. Girls have always, it turns out, tended to do better than boys up until their teens but the traditional view has been that boys, who develop later, catch up by the time of the major public exams at 16 and beyond. The trouble is now that boys are no longer catching up – in Britain last year, for example, 51 per cent of girls achieved five or more passes in the exam for 16-year-olds and only 41 per cent of boys.[6] It is with a certain irony that feminists have noted the worry about this of politicians and commentators who were distinctly unworried about girls' disadvantage in the past.

There are all kinds of theories advanced for this phenomenon. Certainly girls are benefiting from the greater freedom and confidence that a feminist-influenced culture has given them – they are no longer prepared to cede their ground to boys and will seize opportunities that their mothers and certainly their grandmothers would likely have relinquished. It is also undeniable that the fundamental shift in the labour market away from manufacturing and towards service- or information-based industries is likely to suit girls more than boys – some estimates say two-thirds of new jobs created over the next decade will go to women.[6] It is tempting to pin this on globalization, not least when you see the disaffection and hopelessness of working-class boys in what were once the industrial heartlands – the US rustbelt or the Northeast of England – who, far from following in their fathers' footsteps, have only unemployment to look forward to.

If these kinds of recent economic explanations were the only factor, you would not expect any obvious gender-based difference in performance at elementary-school level. Yet the differences are there. The worldwide obsession with testing children at all ages is something to which I return in the second half of this magazine but if tests of seven-year-olds are proving nothing else they are showing that girls are outperforming boys even at this age.

Girls are seizing opportunities that their mothers would have relinquished

Again, theories abound as to why – and we have to leave at the door our beliefs about whether differences between boys and girls derive from environment or heredity, since by the time they get to school they are already established. One notion, for example, is that more traditional modes of teaching – 'chalk and talk' – favour girls, who are more ready to sit down and get on with a task. A feminist teacher at our own school, in a long and fascinating discussion of the gender issue with governors, said that in her experience a simple shift in language can make all the difference: saying, for example, 'let's find out about shape' (which intrigues boys who relish the process of discovery as well as girls) rather than 'let's look at shape' (to which only girls will tend to respond).

Another factor which may contribute to boys' alienation from education is the fact that at primary-school level they are taught almost exclusively by women and thus lack positive male role models. The same situation applies in the Caribbean, where many more boys than girls fail the common entrance exam to secondary school. It is perhaps significant that researchers looking into boys' underachievement in England and the Caribbean have reported a similar feeling that schoolwork is somehow unmasculine. 'I never wanted nobody to tease me and call me a "sissy",' says 17-year-old Algie, from Dominica, explaining why he used to play truant. A female teacher from St Vincent and the Grenadines explains that his attitude is common: 'The boys don't utilize education in the same way [as the girls]. Much of it has to do with image. They don't want to be seen as a nerd, and a nerd is someone who works hard at school.'[5]

Of course different places with different problems require different solutions. As with so many aspects of development there is no one model which can be approved on high and then applied everywhere. While most countries have an inbuilt bias against girls' education, there are some that have always tended the other way, like Lesotho or Mongolia, in whose pastoralist traditions boys have always been expected to remain with their herds. But what is clear is that no attempt to guarantee all children an education will succeed if it is not sensitive to the gender dimension.

Let 12-year-old Amina Hassan of Chikunja Village in Tanzania have the last word. She is one of the girls who has been utterly untouched by the world's supposed commitment to sexual equality in education by the end of the millennium. 'I wake up very early,' she says. 'I have no notion of time. I sweep the compound, wash last night's dishes. Then I go to the well, but the natural wells are all dry now and we have to walk very far to the artificial wells. We have to wait in a long queue as there are many people. Then I go to the farm to dig or pick cashewnuts. I prepare the day's relish and make *ugali* for the family. I sometimes get a few hours to play with my friends in the afternoon. I pound cassava or maize for the evening and next day's meal; I then cook supper. After meals I play or listen to adult conversations, especially when there's moonlight. I go to bed when adults go to sleep. Maybe I could go to school, but it is expensive, and my mother will be alone to do all the work.' ■

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1 Lawrence H Summers, *Investing in All The People*, Quad-i-Azam Lecture, January 1992, World Bank. **2** *Dynamic African Headmistresses*, FAWE 1995. **3** Pauline Rose; Getachew Yoseph; Asmaru Berihun; and Tegegn Nuresu; *Gender and Primary Schooling in Ethiopia*, IDS 1997. **4** **NI** 292, July 1997. **5** *The State of the World's Children 1999*, UNICEF. **6** *The Economist*, 29 May 1999.

◆ SPECIAL FOUR-PAGE PULLOUT ◆

NEW INTERNATIONALIST

Red alert!

PHOTO: CORBIS

DOOMSDAY SCENARIOS were bound to explode into life as the year 2000 (Y2K) neared but the danger of nuclear disaster being triggered by the millennium bug in computers is very real. Even some of the military departments responsible are saying their weapons systems will not be fully 'Y2K compliant'. Yet political leaders still refuse to take missile systems and nuclear submarines off 'alert status' because this would mean lowering their guard. The insanity of having nuclear weapons at all – of holding in readiness warheads that could wipe out human civilization within minutes – has never been more evident.

The *New Internationalist* urges the governments of all the nuclear powers to remove their weapons from alert status throughout the danger period, which begins this month, and to restart initiatives to rid the world of nuclear weapons – permanently.

> ***'Probably one out of five days I wake up in a cold sweat thinking [Y2K] is much bigger than we think, and then the other four days I think maybe we really are on top of it. Everything is so interconnected, it's hard to know with any precision whether we have got it fixed.'***
>
> **– US Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre.**

Y2K Q&A

What is the origin of the millennium bug?

Programmers in the 1960s decided to conserve computer memory by using only two digits to designate the year in computers' internal clocks, with the first two digits assumed to be 19. Unless corrected, microchips and systems may misinterpret year 2000 as 1900 and malfunction. The latest estimates expect at least two per cent of all microchips to malfunction when the date rolls over from 99 to 00.

What kind of computers are vulnerable?

The Y2K (Year 2000) problem primarily affects two kinds of equipment: mainframe computer systems run by big institutions or businesses; and microchips, or 'embedded processors'. There are an estimated 15 billion microchips worldwide, embedded in everything from smoke detectors to sewerage systems, alarms to automobiles.

The essence of the Y2K flaw is that it is unpredictable. It could make a computer stop dead or it could cause havoc by producing invalid data which is not immediately detected. (Watch your pay packets carefully over the next year...) The failure of just one chip can set off a chain of events, bringing down whole systems.

Do nuclear weapons rely on computers?

Nuclear weapons and their associated command, control and communications systems are completely dependent on computers and microchips. The US and Russia in particular monitor each other using interdependent radar, satellite and communications systems. The weapons themselves use millions of microchips, and over the years the military has tried to reduce costs by using 'commercial-off-the-shelf' chips (COTS) which may well be susceptible to the Y2K problem. The only way to make sure a system is Y2K compliant is to check it laboriously line by line, chip by chip.

But surely that's what the military are doing, aren't they?

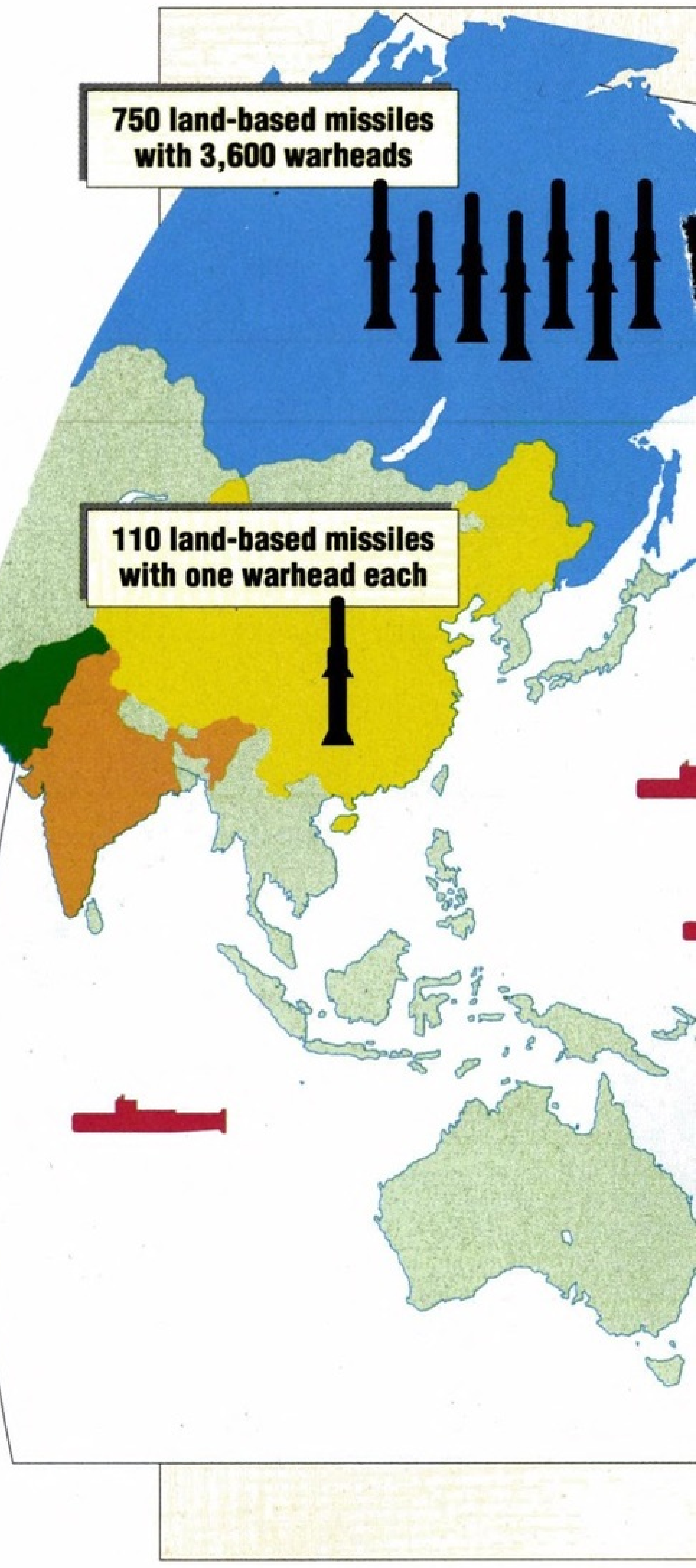
They have been trying but failing. The US Naval Audit Service admitted on 4 January this year that 'the Strategic Systems Programs will not meet the Department of Defense and Navy Target Completion Dates for their mission support and infrastructure.' According to Brookings Institute analyst Bruce Blair, two systems, which are the primary mode of communications with ballistic missile submarines, will not be Y2K compliant by the turn of the century. As of June 1999 264 mission-critical systems in the US Department of Defense are still not yet Y2K compliant.

Why on earth can't they get it together?

They've got huge problems. Much of the software currently in use is based upon virtually extinct programming languages that hardly anyone understands any more. The subsystems they have to test are so numerous and varied that they may not even be able to locate them. And even when they do, the microchips may have a date-specific program written into them that can't be amended. Dry-run testing all systems and sub-systems in every conceivable scenario is fantastically time-consuming.

But if they'd checked it all we'd be safe?

Even if the military systems were completely error-free we would not be out of the woods. Any interface with another system could introduce bad data and wreak havoc. For example, US communications from Strategic Command to its nuclear submarines in the Mediterranean travel partly over the Italian telephone system.


750 land-based missiles with 3,600 warheads
110 land-based missiles with one warhead each

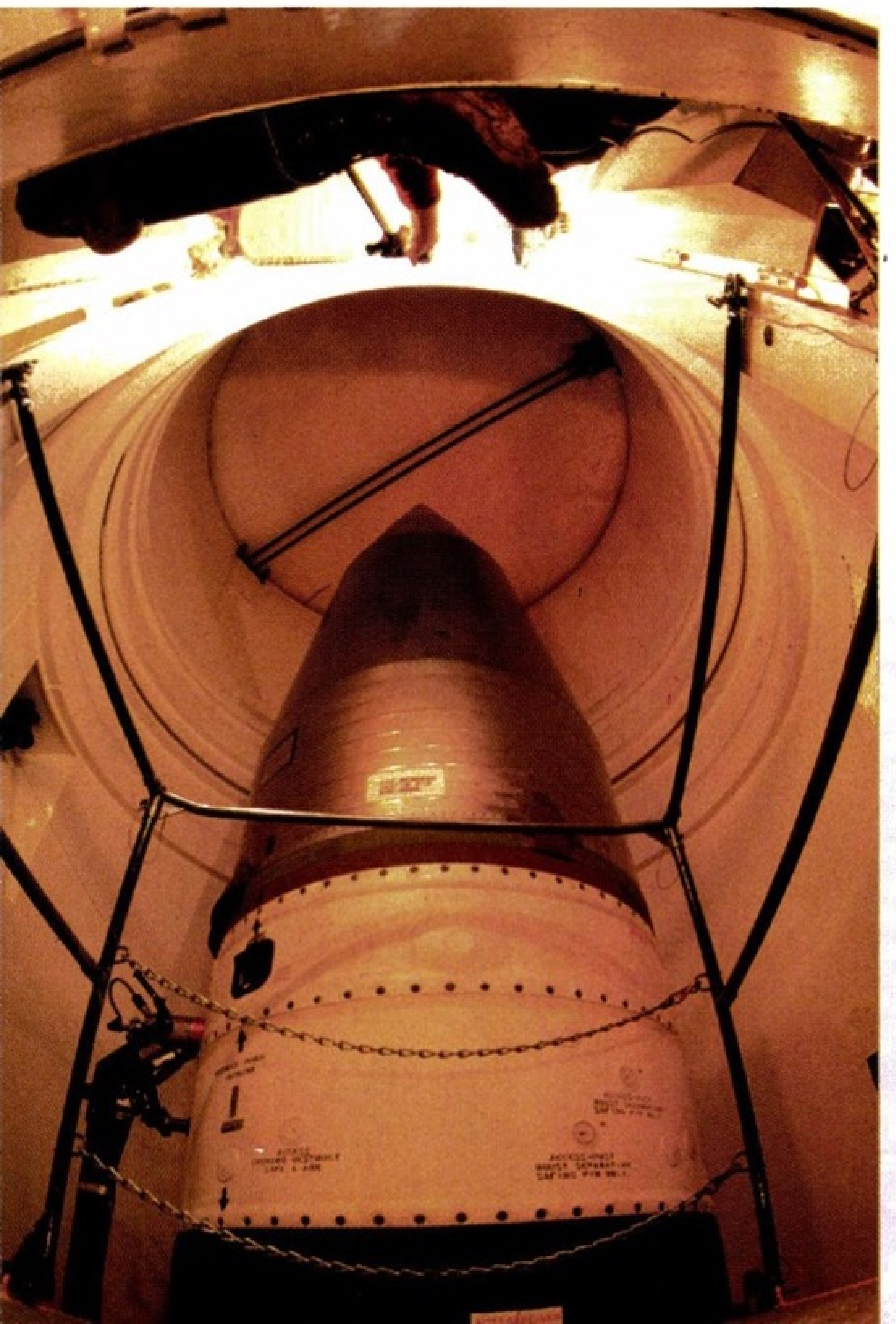
Could a computer failure automatically launch a nuclear missile?

Unlikely. Most nuclear missiles have built-in security systems to avoid accidental launches. The missile would probably disable itself.

So what's the problem?

If the military computer systems collapse there could be false early-warning information or a blank-out, leaving both sides ignorant of what the other is doing. A malfunctioning system could wrongly suggest that an enemy missile had been launched and cause a commander to authorize a missile launch in response.

This almost happened on 3 June 1980 when US nuclear command centres showed that Soviet missiles had been launched. Bomber crews started their engines and Minuteman missiles were readied for launch. Technicians recognized this as a false alarm only just in time. The malfunction was traced back to the failure of one microchip costing 46 cents.



JIM SUGAR PHOTOGRAPHY / CORBIS

**Gilded glint of menace: a Minuteman III missile inside its silo in the United States.
Previous page: a Trident missile launch.**

But that was during the Cold War...

US insistence on retaining the right to launch a pre-emptive strike has led Russia to overturn its previous policy of 'no first use'. Both Russia and the US have a policy of launching nuclear missiles 'on warning'. Missiles are kept on high-alert status in order that they could be fired as soon as an enemy launch was detected. Of the 36,000 nuclear weapons remaining in the world 5,000 sit in silos on high-alert status. These missiles can be fired in about 15 minutes and reach their target cities in another 30 minutes.

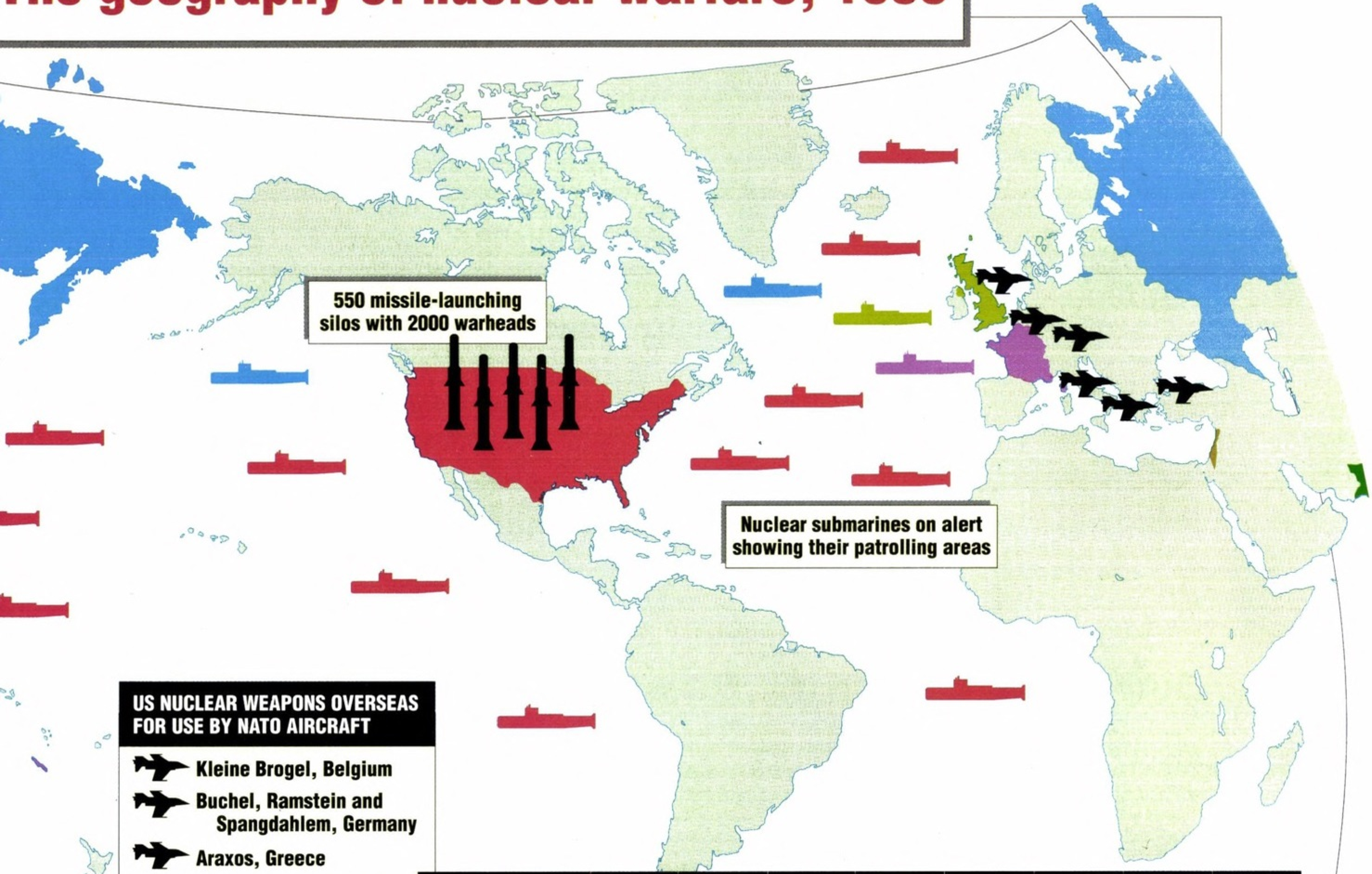
But surely missiles are no longer targeted on foreign cities?

It is true that all the main nuclear powers (the US, Britain, France, Russia and China) have agreed to stop targeting 'enemy' cities. But retargeting would only take ten seconds. And in the event of a computer malfunction, some experts argue that a missile could revert to its last targeting instructions.

Aren't most nuclear weapons carried on submarines these days?

Yes, and these submarines, powered by nuclear reactors, are completely dependent

The geography of nuclear warfare, 1999


550 missile-launching silos with 2000 warheads
Nuclear submarines on alert showing their patrolling areas

US NUCLEAR WEAPONS OVERSEAS FOR USE BY NATO AIRCRAFT

- Kleine Brogel, Belgium
- Buchel, Ramstein and Spangdahlem, Germany
- Araxos, Greece
- Aviano and Ghedi Torre, Italy
- Volkel, the Netherlands
- Incirlik, Turkey
- Lakenheath, Britain

	US	RUSSIA	BRITAIN	FRANCE	CHINA	ISRAEL	PAKISTAN	INDIA
Total estimated nuclear stockpile	12,070	22,500	200	450	400	200	Unknown	Unknown
Total estimated number on alert	4,600	4,000	48	100	100+	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Y2K compliance status	Doubtful	Highly unlikely	Doubtful	Unknown	Unlikely	Unlikely	Unknown	Unknown

on computers, unable even to raise a periscope without them. In one recent case involving a British Trident submarine, the nuclear-power plant was accidentally turned off and the submarine started to plummet to the ocean floor. Luckily, the reactor was turned back on before the submarine imploded from the pressure of being beyond its maximum design depth. But if Y2K problems caused the glitch there might be no way of restarting the reactor.

You only mention Britain and the US. What about other nuclear powers?

There is worryingly little information about their nuclear checking. But what there is suggests India, Pakistan, Israel, France and China are way behind the US and Britain in their preparations for the general Y2K problem, with China and Pakistan lagging farthest behind. US intelligence sources testified to Congress: 'Its late start in addressing Y2K issues suggests Beijing will fail to solve many of its Y2K problems in the limited time remaining, and will probably experience failures in key sectors such as telecommunications, electric power and banking.' But China is less of a worry because it does not keep its nuclear weapons on high alert and has a 'no first use' policy.

What about Russia?

Until February 1999 Russia was denying that its nuclear forces could face Y2K difficulties. But according to Russian scientists now working in the US, the financially starved Russian military and its antiquated computer systems are bound to be prone to failure. Since then Russia has acknowledged it has a problem and asked for financial and technical assistance. The chair of the State Communications Committee, Aleksandr Krupnov, said recently: 'Who knows if the country will be ready? I can't give any guarantees.'

The most worrying element is Russia's nuclear control system, called 'Perimeter'. According to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, if Moscow looked like it was under attack, or even if command links to key Russian leaders were interrupted, Perimeter would automatically launch a communications missile that would in turn transmit the codes to launch thousands of nuclear weapons.

But surely if the US and the Russians know about the Y2K problem they will realize any warnings on New Year's Eve are likely to be false alarms?

The two countries were laying plans for a jointly operated early-warning centre that might help this. But when war in the Balkans broke out Russia broke off co-operation on this. Besides, 1 January 2000 is not the only date to worry about. There are other dates on which systems could malfunction.

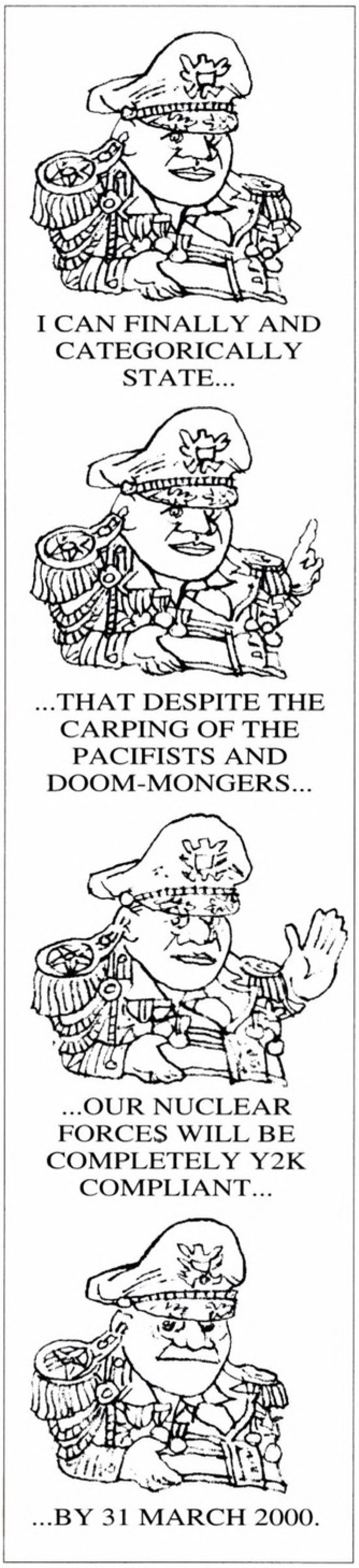
Such as?

Such as 21 August 1999, when the internal clock of the Global Positioning System (by which the world now measures time, using signals from satellites) will roll over to include the year 2000, with possible calamitous results for any country whose satellite receivers haven't been properly configured.

So what do we do?

Turn the page to find out.

Alarm call


I CAN FINALLY AND CATEGORICALLY STATE...
...THAT DESPITE THE CARPING OF THE PACIFISTS AND DOOM-MONGERS...
...OUR NUCLEAR FORCES WILL BE COMPLETELY Y2K COMPLIANT...
...BY 31 MARCH 2000.

CARTOON: CHRIS BRAZIER & ALAN HUGHES

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY TO AVERT THE DANGER OF NUCLEAR CATASTROPHE POSED BY THE MILLENNIUM BUG. That is for all nuclear powers to stand down from nuclear operations. This would involve taking all nuclear weapons on board submarines and in land-based silos off alert status and decoupling all nuclear warheads from their delivery vehicles.

In addition to removing us all from immediate danger, these moves would give a fresh impetus to a nuclear-disarmament process which has fallen into disrepair.

The *New Internationalist* believes last year's nuclear tests by India and Pakistan demonstrated that the nuclear status quo – in which five powers are allowed to have nuclear weapons but all others are prohibited from developing them – is not only morally bankrupt but also completely unsustainable.

The way forward has been shown by the Mandela Government in South Africa which, on coming to power, unilaterally dismantled the nuclear-weapons capability which had been developed by the apartheid regime. South Africa is now playing a lead role in the international campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In June 1998, along with Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden, it launched the 'Middle Powers Initiative' which criticized the nuclear powers and demanded that they start work immediately to get rid of their nuclear arsenals.

THE Y2K DANGER SHOULD BE A WAKE-UP CALL FOR THE WORLD AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR THE ERA OF NUCLEAR TERROR.

TO HELP RAISE THE ALARM, the NI suggests that readers send letters to the governments of all the nuclear powers (with the exception of China, the only one with a 'no first use' policy). The following sample text may help:

'I am writing to convey my extreme concern over the possibility that Year 2000 (Y2K)-related computer failures in nuclear-weapons systems may lead to an unacceptable risk of nuclear war by accident or miscalculation.

'Because none of the nuclear-weapons states can guarantee that their nuclear-related computer systems are Y2K compliant, the only responsible solution is for them all to stand down nuclear operations. This should include taking nuclear weapons off alert status and decoupling nuclear warheads from delivery vehicles.

'I strongly urge that you remove all strategic and tactical nuclear weapons from 'hair trigger' alert and place them in a status in which at least hours and preferably days would be required to launch them.

'The immediate stakes are so high, and the potential for global catastrophe so clear, that mutually verified de-alerting in the face of the Y2K computer problem must take precedence over all other considerations of politics and national security.'

SEND LETTERS TO:

Britain: Prime Minister Tony Blair, 10 Downing St, London SW1A 2AA.

France: President Jacques Chirac, Palais de l'Elysée, 55 rue de Faubourg St Honoré, 75008 Paris.

India: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, South Block, New Delhi 110011.

Israel: Prime Minister Ehud Barak, PO Box 187, Kiryat Ben-Gurion, Jerusalem 91919.

Pakistan: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister's Secretariat, Islamabad.

Russia: President Boris Yeltsin, Krasnopresenskaya-2, Moscow.

United States: President Bill Clinton, White House, Washington DC.

> ***'The Titanic sank in an ocean that was 99-per-cent free of icebergs.'***
> **– Y2K microchip systems expert Mark Frautschi.**

ACTION CONTACTS

INTERNATIONAL

Middle Powers Initiative 126 Rogers St, Cambridge, MA 02142, US. Tel: +1 617 492 9189. Fax: +1 617 868 2560. E-mail: mpi@igc.org

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Disarmament and Security Centre PO Box 8390, Christchurch. Tel/Fax: +64 3 348 1353. E-mail: kate@chch.planet.org.nz

AUSTRALIA

Friends of the Earth Sydney Suite 15, 1st Floor, 104 Bathurst St, Sydney, NSW, 2000. Tel: +61 2 9283 2006. Fax: +61 2 9283 2005. Web: nonukes@foesyd.org.au

Greenpeace Asia Web: www.xs2.greenpeace.org/~comms/rw/dec18.html

BRITAIN

CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) 162 Holloway Rd, London N7 8DQ. Tel: +44 171 700 2393. E-mail: cnd@gn.apc.org

CANADA

Physicians for Global Survival 145 Spruce St #208, Ottawa, Ont K1R 6P1. Tel: +1 613 233 1982 . Fax: +1 613 233 9028. E-mail: pgs@web.net

IRELAND

Irish CND Tel: +353 21 506 411. E-mail: annandgerry@tinet.ie

UNITED STATES

British American Security Information Council 1900 L St NW-725, Washington DC 20036. Tel: +1 202 785 1266. E-mail: basicusa@igc.apc.org.

USEFUL WEBSITES ON THE Y2K NUCLEAR DANGER

Sangers Y2K News Reports
www.sangersreview.com

Gary North's Y2K Links/ Forums
www.garynorth.com/y2k

The Detroit News Y2K Watch
www.detnews.com/1999/technology/y2k/index.htm

Y2K Today
www.y2ktoday.com/modules/home/default.asp

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND)
www.cnduk.org

British American Security Information Council (BASIC)
www.basicint.org

Federation of American Scientists
www.fas.org/2000/y2k

People for Nuclear Disarmament (Western Australia)
www.freespeech.org/pndwa

Testing, testing, 123

The drive for more tests and school league tables is sweeping the world. Education is being turned into an industry. But how do you test a child's imagination? Or measure their spirit?

Anum Khan was seven when she died in a fire started by arsonists at her home; her older brother was also killed when he went into the burning house to try to save her. Her death plunged two communities that she belonged to into shock: the Muslim community in East Oxford and our school. The weeks that followed taught me that schools at their best are not just places where children learn facts, skills or patterns of behaviour; they are both a vital part of the community they serve and places that nurture the whole child – hearts and spirits, as well as minds.

Instead of noting Anum's death with sadness and then simply moving on with business, as might have been expected, headteacher Tony Eaude and the staff recognized that they had an important role to play in helping children to understand and cope with the loss of a friend – and in helping Anum's family in their grief.

Children were encouraged to think about what Anum had meant to them – they wrote their own messages to her in a special book that was kept open for a whole term before being given to her family; they wrote poems and drew pictures in her honour that remained on display throughout that school year. There was a memorial assembly in her honour to which many members of her wider family came. This could easily have been an awkward affair, consumed by mawkishness or, worse, full of Muslim toes being trodden on by heavy Christian feet. Instead it was beautifully handled and deeply felt, as moving a tribute to the memory of this young girl as any memorial service for one of the great and the good in Westminster Abbey.

This was, for me, the best kind of spiritual education. I have no particular religious faith myself and am, to be honest, still slightly bemused at having succeeded the local vicar as chair of governors of a Church of England school (almost exactly a third of British state schools are still, bizarrely, overseen by the Anglican or Catholic churches; the first state Islamic school was approved in London last year). My position would be impossible in most other church schools but the fact that a third of the children are Muslim (and probably another third are agnostic or atheist)

JACKY CHAPMAN/FORMAT

Bright spark: number crunching in the East End of London.

Window on wonder. Schools are more than just testing factories. These children in Ghana don't need telling.

RON GILING/STILL PICTURES

has made it essential for this particular school to develop a sensitive, multicultural language. It is not just that the key festivals of Islam and Judaism are acknowledged, but that children are taught about the importance of the inner life in a way that all can understand – cultivating a sense of wonder or concentrating on a candle flame in silence, for example, rather than through scriptural assertions that Jesus was the son of God.

Triple threat

Yet the ability of the school to look after the wider needs of the whole child – and by that I mean not just this spiritual area, but also things like an appreciation of art and music, a moral and critical understanding of the world they live in – is now under threat. The threat comes from triple obsessions which are currently sweeping through the entire Western world: standardized testing of children; judging schools by their place in exam league tables; and a back-to-basics drive on numeracy and literacy.

An eight-year-old boy I know well wet his bed every night last week, for the first time in years. This was mystifying until his parents realized that it coincided with the week in which he was doing standardized tests. There is nothing riding on these particular tests, yet he had become convinced that somehow they would determine his whole future, would place him in the 'bottom' or 'top' group at his next school.

Up and down the country anecdotal evidence abounds of huge tranches of classroom time being given over to preparation for tests. Even teachers who tell children not to worry contribute to the sense of crisis by making it clear that their school will be judged by the results – as indeed it will be in the current climate. Testing can be a useful diagnostic tool; one piece of information that can be used alongside teacher assessments and regular course work to track children's progress. But it has become an omnipotent obsession.

Consider also my five-year-old daughter who came home from school last week and explained in fairly precise terms to her bemused English-graduate parents what was meant by a 'homophone' and an 'ellipsis'. This will be an experience shared in all quarters of Britain, since it is a product of the new National Literacy Strategy under which all children of primary age have to be taught literacy for a full hour every day.

To be fair, standards of literacy are giving legitimate cause for concern right across the English-speaking world. And when English teachers can report (as my partner did last week) that their most able students have managed to make it through the education system to the age of 18 without knowing what nouns, verbs and adjectives are, then it is clear that the drive in the post-1960s period to get away from rigid grammar drills was maybe just a tad too successful.

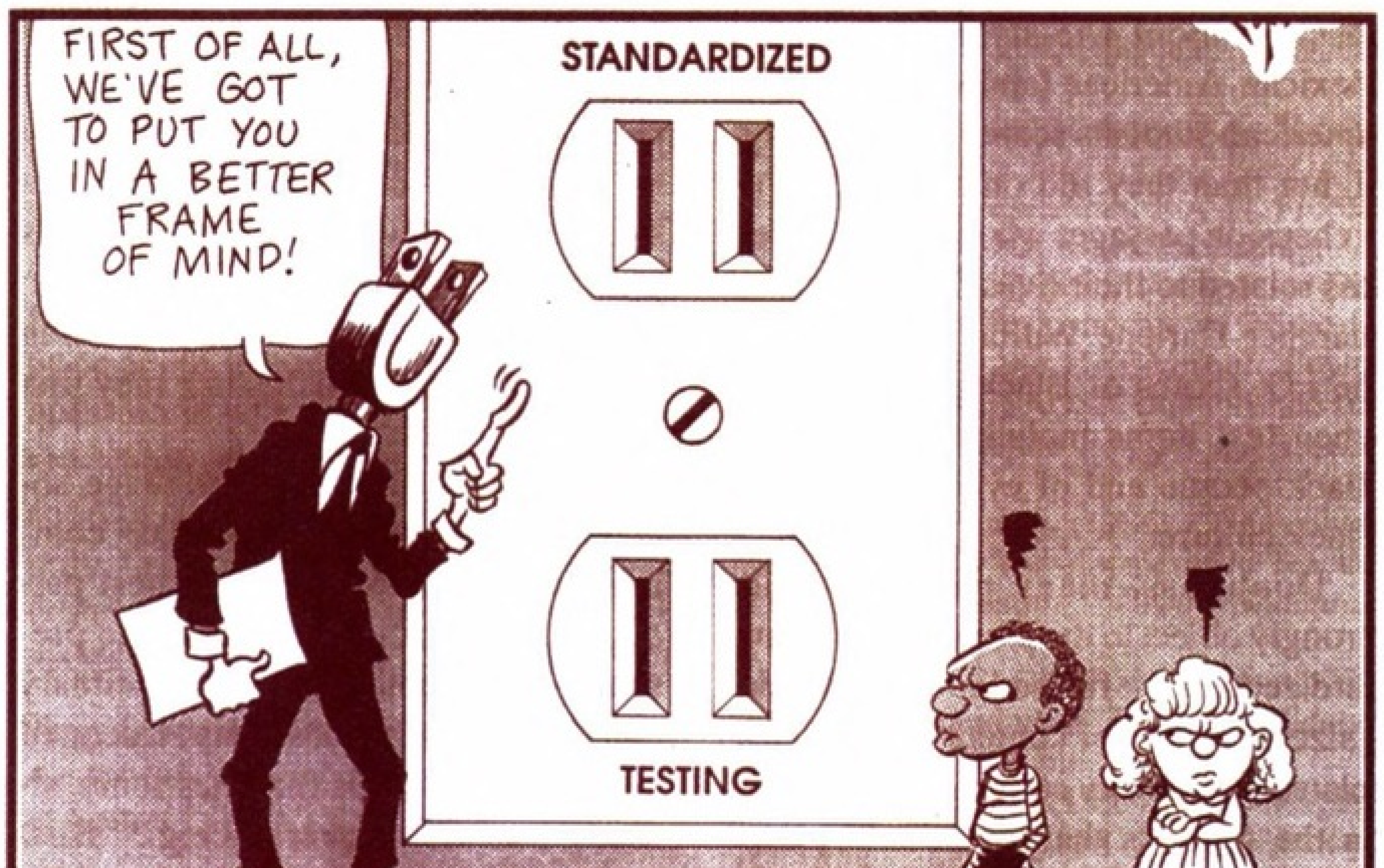
But the absurdity of expecting children just out of playschool to learn technical grammatical terms will be evident to everyone but the Government ministers who imposed the scheme – and that's without taking into account the bewilderment of those of my daughter's classmates who, speaking only Bengali or Pashto, are required to learn that a word is broken up into 'phonemes'.

Working the league

The 'back-to-basics' campaign is gripping the Western world with increasing force. Educationists and teachers are being forced to play the numbers game. Politicians who traditionally would not have bothered much about schools except as photo opportunities have started screaming that there are press stories about, say, a former Communist country like the Czech Republic outperforming Western countries by a mile in the international league table for mathematics and science (see *Top of the global class*, page 24).

This has led to a general concern to 'raise standards' in education, which increasingly means judging schools' success by the results their students achieve in standardized tests. Schools are now required to publish these results and have them tabulated in league tables against other schools both locally and nationally. The routine assumption of even quite intelligent people looking at these school league tables is that like is somehow being compared with like. In fact, of course, a school's results will depend far more on its location than on its teaching standards. An inner-city school with a high proportion of children from poor backgrounds or whose home language is different may have worked miracles to achieve test scores that are, in bald terms, a quarter as good as those of a school in a comfortable suburban neighbourhood where most parents have benefited from higher education.

CARTOON: HUCK / KONOPACKI


FIRST OF ALL, WE'VE GOT TO PUT YOU IN A BETTER FRAME OF MIND!
STANDARDIZED
TESTING

The US has tested students at specified ages since 1969, yet it is only since 1990, in response to increased public and political interest, that state-by-state comparisons have been published.[1] All but two states – Nebraska and Iowa – now use standardized tests. The testing is often of the 'high-stakes' kind – in other words it can make or break children's lives, the results determining whether they progress to the next grade or make it to college. For years these tests involved simply shading in answers to multiple-choice questions; most now include writing an essay. This sounds like an improvement until you hear how these essays are graded. In the case of the children from 24 US states they are all graded in the same place: by the private firm Measurement Inc in North Carolina, which employs college-educated jobbers with no teaching qualifications to read and rate hundreds of papers a day.

One such reader was freelance photographer Julian Harrison, who once graded 10,700 papers in two months. 'There were times I'd be reading a paper every ten seconds,' he said. 'It was horrific... You could skim them very quickly,' he went on. 'You could actually – I know this sounds bizarre – put a number on these things without reading the paper.' Given this kind of approach

to marking, it is small wonder that errors occur, as in the case of Neha Rana, who failed the writing test and as a result was demoted from an 'A-class' where she was writing research papers to a 'C-class'. She spent months doing remedial work until her school queried the result and Measurement Inc admitted their mistake.[2]

Even if the assessment were more accurate, this kind of colour-by-numbers approach to education would still be profoundly disturbing (see *Dancin' Circles*, page 25). It is no coincidence that among the earliest advocates of testing and raising standards were key corporate moguls like Louis Gerstner of IBM, whose 'vision' could have come out of his own company's mission statement but has since been taken up by politicians of every hue (and cry). It is now routine for education to be seen in economic terms – Tony Blair's New Labour sees it as essential to making Britain 'competitive'; Macquarie University in Sydney proudly boasts 'Where Higher Learning Means Higher Earning'.

The education production line

Education in the West is fast becoming indistinguishable from any other industry, complete with marketing brochures and mission statements, teachers on performance-related pay and schools competing with each other to produce ever-higher grades. You have special needs? You're disabled? You're from a rough housing estate? Sorry, but schools have to protect their reputations, you know...

And as the basics of literacy, numeracy and the 'core curriculum' take over, so the wider wonders of art, music, the insights of history, geography and social studies are squeezed into the margins. In Oregon, for example, new tests are based on state standards that remove from the high-school social-studies curriculum virtually everything before the last decade of the nineteenth century, which means 'no early European/Native American contacts, no American Revolution, no slavery or slave resistance, no Abolition Movement, no Civil War, no building of the railroads, no Reconstruction.'[3] What takes the place of this kind of material is increasingly a curriculum that ensures the power of the dominant culture, usually in the interests of 'national unity'.

But, again, progressive people in education have to look at themselves, since this kind of right-wing agenda would not have gained ground so quickly if there were not some substance to its claims. For too long educators and policy-makers have failed to focus on the vast difference between what is taught in schools and what is learned. This has certainly been true of the developing world, which has been understandably

IDEAL & reality

'A flame lighting up ignorance' to some. But Bangladesh's programme to revolutionize primary schools is not exactly popular with teachers, as **Sameera Huque** discovers.

The sunny room, the smiling teacher, and the bright faces of over 60 children squashed into orderly rows of benches. The walls have been painted with colourful pictures of flowers and alphabets, but some of the small faces still hold a pinched look – from no breakfast that morning. The teacher, standing in front of the expectant faces, displays and explains, questions, sings and recites; the children follow, mostly as though programmed to do so. Their hands go up, memorized answers are still warbled out, and there's the end of another class.

This is an 'IDEAL' class – the Intensive District Approach to Education for All programme, a Government initiative in partnership with UNICEF, which is seeking to revolutionize primary education in Bangladesh and make sure 95 per cent of children are enrolled by 2001.

At the heart of IDEAL is the Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning method, based on the work of progressive educationalist Howard Gardner. Breaking away from the traditional reliance of Bangladeshi primary schools on rote learning, the new method aims to engage different parts of a child's brain, so that a musically inclined child should learn more from songs and a visually orientated child more from pictures.

Most teachers have not responded eagerly to IDEAL and its attending reams of paperwork. They were given training in interactive teaching, including dancing and puppetry, to make learning an enjoyable experience for children. But they insist that though the ideas are good, this programme at its core is indifferent to the main problems facing primary education, which is chronically underfunded. Shyamolia School in Mymensingh, for example, has the average infrastructure of schools in rural districts: three rooms, in which 370 students are taught by two teachers and the principal, Kamaluddin Helal. 'There are so many students in each class that by the time I've called the roll and said hello, it's time to leave and go to the next class!' Mr Helal exclaimed. 'What time do I have left to teach in?'

Rehana Mazumdar teaches at the Jigatola School in Dhaka, one of the five 'pilot' schools where IDEAL was launched in 1996. This is one of the top eight government primary schools in the country, yet there are no colourful classroom walls here – but class sections are smaller and students more confident and active. Mrs Mazumdar finds that the IDEAL methods have decreased her workload through group learning, and that the children are eager to participate. 'But I have 43 students enrolled into my class. It would be much more difficult with a larger group,' she says, 'and teaching primary is very tough. Parents only have one or two kids to worry about while a teacher often has nearly a hundred at hand. Under these circumstances a child will never get the proper attention.'

But Professor Alauddin Ahmed, IDEAL's Project Director takes a very different view. 'They have never worked in their lives, and now faced with something new, they must oppose it,' he says vehemently of all primary teachers. 'The younger ones are more eager, but the older teachers are hopeless.' He is convinced that 'teachers could do it in the time that they have, no matter how large the class'.

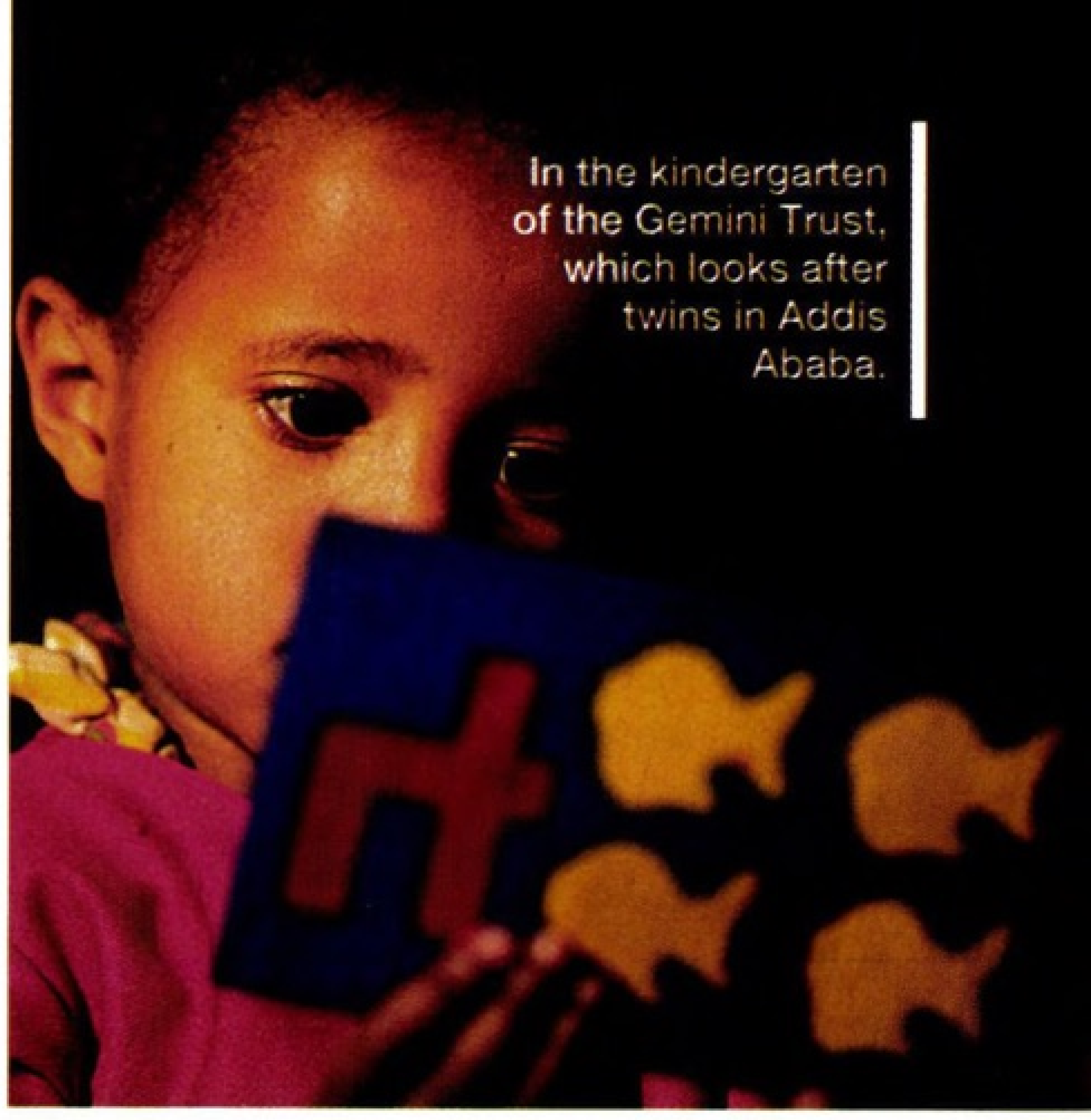
As this suggests, there is a bitter lack of understanding between the project designers and the teachers to which the Government seems completely indifferent. Jigatola's principal, Jasimuddin Ahmed, believes that lack of infrastructure and ever-increasing workloads have bottlenecked primary schools to the point of exhaustion and that a major shake-up at the top is required. 'All the decision-makers sitting in Dhaka are of college background. What do college professors know about teaching primary?' he asks indignantly. 'Under the current system, primary teachers must take part in everything from polio vaccination to voter-list duty – is that the way to increase quality of education?'

Another sore point at the grassroots is that from 1999, all vacations are being decided centrally. 'Look at the sense in this – after the children have roasted sitting in class during the hot months, the vacations come in the monsoon when they should be studying!' exclaims Mr Helal. The change has infuriated schools around the country, but IDEAL's Professor Alauddin claims that one set vacation 'helps us organize projects more efficiently, so that we never find schools closed on our visits'.

If funds can be arranged, IDEAL will be extended till 2004. Both UNICEF and the Government insist that it is still too early to judge the project. But this 'new-lit flame to emancipate this nation suffering long from the darkness of ignorance' (a quote from UNICEF's promotional video for IDEAL) has its toughest critics in the ranks of the 'flame-bearers'. Backed by the requisite resources and introduced with respect, initiatives like this might well be 'ideal'. As it is, it looks like another long shot in the dark. ■

Sameera Huque is a photojournalist with Drik Picture Library in Dhaka.

SAMEERA HUQUE



In the kindergarten of the Gemini Trust, which looks after twins in Addis Ababa.

PIETRO CENINI/PANOS PICTURES

preoccupied with the vast effort to deliver sufficient schools and teachers to keep pace with demand.

There is unfortunately every possibility that a child can attend school and yet learn next to nothing from the experience. A recent World Bank national household survey in Bangladesh, for example, found that five years of primary schooling resulted in only a first-grade equivalent of learning achievement, while three years of schooling had a value of approximately zero.

This is hardly surprising when you consider the standard diet of rote-learning, hectoring and lecturing that passes for teaching in an average Bangladeshi school. We cannot expect every child to be clamouring to get into the schools of the South if what they find inside is so deeply uninspiring. The better education reforms in the South are increasingly committed to fostering child-centred techniques in the classroom, with mixed success (see *IDEAL and reality*, page 23).

There is a profound irony in this by which I was deeply struck as I worked on the UNICEF report. The rich world, as I've outlined, seems hell-bent on rooting out creative, child-centred teaching and learning in order to resuscitate many of the practices of The Good Old Days (a recent issue of *The Economist* went so far as to caption a drawing of a Victorian school with precisely those words). Well, I went to school before those Old Days were quite done. I experienced having to move seats each week according to the position I'd achieved in a test; I remember all too well being bored to distraction by Gradgrindian teachers whose idea of a creative lesson was to get a pupil to read out a page of a textbook instead of simply doing it themselves. Golden Age? Not on your life.

Rescuing the spirit

In the Majority World, by contrast, the trend, if anything, is in the opposite direction. Many, perhaps most schools, of course, have to make do with next to no equipment and class sizes twice as big as those thought normal in the West. But where it is at all possible, the emphasis is on introducing more child-centred, flexible methods.

A former contributor to the **NI**, Anna Robinson-Pant, recently returned to Britain after years of living in Nepal and was struck by exactly this: 'having our seven-year-old joining school here, I can't help feeling the contradictions: there, I was a development worker promoting participatory innovative education, whereas here we come back to more and more emphasis on "standardization", the 3 Rs, phonics etc.'

Among the innovative techniques being used in Nepal at the moment are those of Shikshak Samakhya, otherwise known as Joyful Learning, a movement which began in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh in 1992 and has since spread to ten other states, as well as other countries in South Asia. It is based on the belief that all primary teachers can be motivated and successful if they receive sufficient trust, support and guidance. Teachers pledge to teach with enthusiasm and to incorporate song and dance as well as simple, locally made teaching aids. Now, says Sardar Singh Rathore, a headteacher from Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, 'Not only are they enjoying their teaching in the classrooms but they have been able to make it so interesting that children are eager to come to school.' And when school has to battle constantly against children being pulled into work, that eagerness is vital.

This empowerment of teachers is necessary not just in India but all over the world. The traditional image of the teacher as a wise and respected figure in the community, bearing the torch of learning to the next generation, seems sadly inappropriate given the diminished status and demoralized state of the teaching profession worldwide. In the early 1990s the Second ILO Meeting on the Conditions of Work of Teachers concluded that the situation of teachers had reached 'an intolerably low point' – their working conditions were being drastically eroded and an exodus of qualified and experienced teachers was resulting.[4]

'Teachers have seen a massive decline in their status,' says Mary Hatwood Futrell, President of the umbrella teacher union Education International. 'They are asked to work long hours for a salary that has rarely kept pace with inflation; they often work with only a few materials of very poor quality... and more and more time is spent on needless administration brought about by constantly changing government policies.'[5]

Teachers, like children, have become subject to the productivist view of education which runs the risk of seeing teachers as just another 'input', not quite as costly as a classroom but much more costly than a textbook.

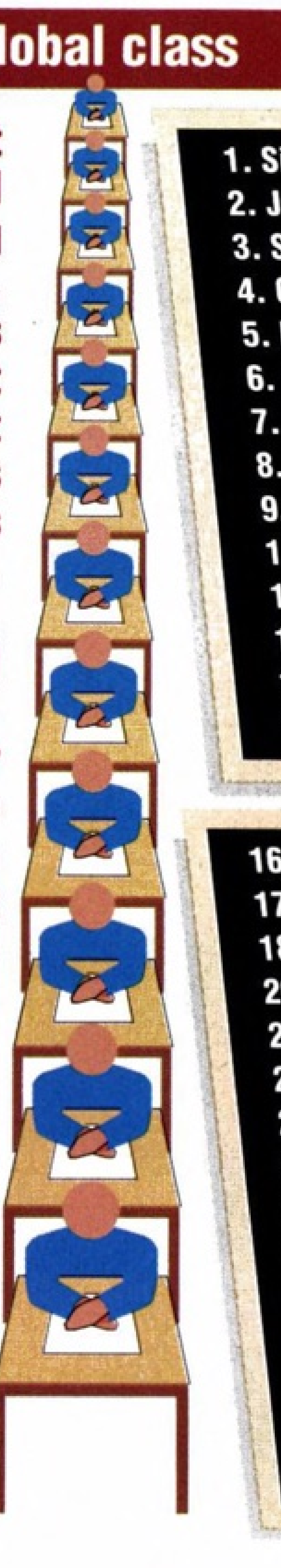
But schools are not factories whose success is measured in the number of children churned out at the end. Education's success can only be gauged according to what children have learned, in the skills, lively minds and values they carry with them into life beyond school. The teacher is no less vital to that learning experience than she or he has ever been. The modern world may be bursting at the seams with information but: 'You need a teacher to sort out the information from the data that surrounds the student; you need a good teacher to sort out the knowledge from the information; you need an excellent teacher to sort out the wisdom from the knowledge.'[6]

Tony Eaude, the local headteacher I mentioned earlier, put it similarly in a speech to colleagues when he left the job last year, urging them not to lose sight of what matters amid the onslaught of Education as Production Line. 'I was told a story many years ago by a headteacher from Kenya. He was now head of the school where he had learnt as a young boy. The children were often taught outside, keeping out of the heat in the shade of great trees. When he was young, like so many children, he had planted seeds; returning 50 years later, he realized that he had planted not only trees, but classrooms for the future.

'As you plant, never plant only one tree. Plant three – one for shade, one for fruit, and one for beauty.' ■

Top of the global class

In the biggest international test of learning achievement, 13-year-olds in 41 different countries sat the same tests in mathematics and science. The results, published in 1997, set the fur flying in the Western countries that expected to do best.



1. Singapore	1250
2. Japan	1176
3. South Korea	1172
4. Czech Rep	1138
5. Belgium (F)*	1115
6. Hong Kong	1110
7. Bulgaria	1105
8. Netherlands	1101
9. Slovenia	1101
10. Austria	1097
11. Hungary	1091
12. Slovakia	1091
13. Australia	1075
14. Russia	1073
16. Ireland	1065
17. Canada	1058
18. England	1058
20. Thailand	1047
24. United States	1034
25. Aotearoa/NZ	1033
27. Scotland	1015
34. Romania	968
35. Lithuania	953
36. Cyprus	937
37. Portugal	934
38. Iran	899
39. Kuwait	822
40. Colombia	796
41. South Africa	680

(Figures opposite are combined scores for maths and science; international average=1000).

***The Flemish-speaking part of Belgium which was assessed separately from the French-speaking part.**

Source: International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 1997.

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1 Vincent Greaney and Thomas Kellaghan, *Monitoring the Learning Outcomes of Education Systems*, World Bank 1996. **2** Quoted in David Glovin, 'Welcome to Measurement Inc', *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 1999. **3** Bill Bigelow, 'Tests from Hell', *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 1999. **4** Cited in *The Learning of Those Who Teach: Towards a New Paradigm of Teacher Education*, UNICEF/UNESCO. **5** *Education News*, Feb 1997, UNICEF. **6** Victor Ordonez, keynote address to the International Conference on 'Partnerships in Teacher Development for a New Asia', 6-8 December 1995.

Dancin' circles

You might standardize tests and even teaching but some children will still burst out of the box, as **Daniel Ferri** recalls.

LAST March, I stood in front of my classroom and tore the plastic from a stack of papers. On those papers were printed the topic my sixth-graders, and thousands of other Illinois sixth-graders, would spend the next 40 minutes writing about.

We are all graded on the results – the students, teachers and schools. Under state law, we all must take the Illinois Goals Assessment Program tests, the IGAP, to ensure that across the state, all students take the same test at the same time, write about the same topic, and follow the same rules.

The IGAP is law because the easiest way for politicians to pretend they care about education is to stand up and declare that students are not learning because teachers can't teach and the schools are rotten, and we are gonna fix it by... by taking a test. Not that those politicians have any idea what we should test for, or how we would test for it if we knew. But that does not matter. Demands for more testing sound good on TV. So the Illinois legislature told our state bureaucrats to design tests in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, and make everyone take them for two weeks in March.

By law, Illinois students learn to write by the numbers. The writing must be standardized. The first paragraph of a paper must do this this this this and this, the three main body paragraphs must do that that that that and that, and the conclusion paragraph must begin with two 'thises', followed by three 'thats', and end with an exciting 'this'. I am not making this – or that – up.

And those are just the rules for a persuasive-type paper. We learn different rules for expository and narrative papers, then the papers are graded like a standardized test. Judging writing like this is like judging chili by counting the beans. This is not how people write. This is how they fill out tax forms. The kids hate it, especially the best writers.

'Mr Ferri,' they ask, 'haven't you ever heard of foreshadowing? If I want to tell my story a different way, why can't I?'

I explain that our state legislature has determined that we must have standards of instruction. The children look at me like I need to blow my nose. I tell them about basics of form that once mastered can be improvised on. They keep looking at me. I try to convince them that these are efficient formulas for clear writing. They keep looking.

Finally I say: 'Look, neither of us has any choice here. You have to take these tests, I have to give them, and some poor soul in North Carolina has to read and grade 500 of them a day. They have a list of the rules you learned for writing each kind of essay. If you don't follow a rule, they take points from your score. They don't care what you write. They only care about the rules. If you don't follow the rules, you get a bad score. The scores are published in the paper. If our scores aren't good, then people won't think our schools are good, and they won't want to move here, which will make the real estate people mad, and they will yell at the school board, who will yell at the superintendent, who will yell at the principal, who will yell at me. This is not about writing; this is about not getting yelled at.'

This they understand.

On the front page of the test booklet, students must record their name, grade, student ID number, date of birth, ethnicity, and god knows what else. Each letter or number goes in a box, then under the box, in number-2 pencil, the student must fill in a circle that corresponds to that letter or number or ethnicity. If the boxes and circles aren't filled out right, or the marks aren't dark enough, the machines can't read them, and we get yelled at.

The students filled out these information pages the day before the test. After they were finished, the pages looked as if they had been used to line bird cages. Random marks were everywhere. So I stuck post-it notes on the worst of them saying, 'Print your name more clearly'. Or, 'Darken circles'.

The morning of the first writing test my students sat vacant and resigned, like Pickett's Virginians at Gettysburg waiting for the charge. I stood in front of the class and read from my booklet. By law, I recited the exact same words that thousands of other sixth-grade teachers would read: 'You will have 40 minutes to...' I ended with: 'Turn over the prompt page, read what the topic is, and begin writing. Good luck.'

I wasn't bound by law to say 'good luck' but I thought it might be OK to wing it there.

The topic was: 'Should students be required to wear uniforms to school?' The children picked up their pencils, took a breath, and wrote. The only sound was the turning of pages, the scratching and the sharpening of pencils.

As required by law, I announced when 20 minutes were left, then 5, then when time was up. I collected the prompt pages and the test packets, and set them on my desk while the students stretched and talked quietly. Then I heard Duane ask Becky, 'What did you write about?'

'Well, I wrote about uniforms,' Becky answered. 'We all did, it said so on the paper.'

'Mine didn't say that,' Duane said. 'Mine said to write about dancin' circles.'

Becky and I both said, 'What? What did you write about?'

'I wrote about dancin' circles,' Duane responded. 'Here, I'll show you.'

I reached for the pile of prompt pages, but Duane was already rummaging through the stack of test booklets. Becky said: 'Those didn't say what to write about!'

'Mine did,' Duane answered. He pulled his test booklet out of the stack and pointed to the Post-it stuck to the front page saying 'Darken circles'.

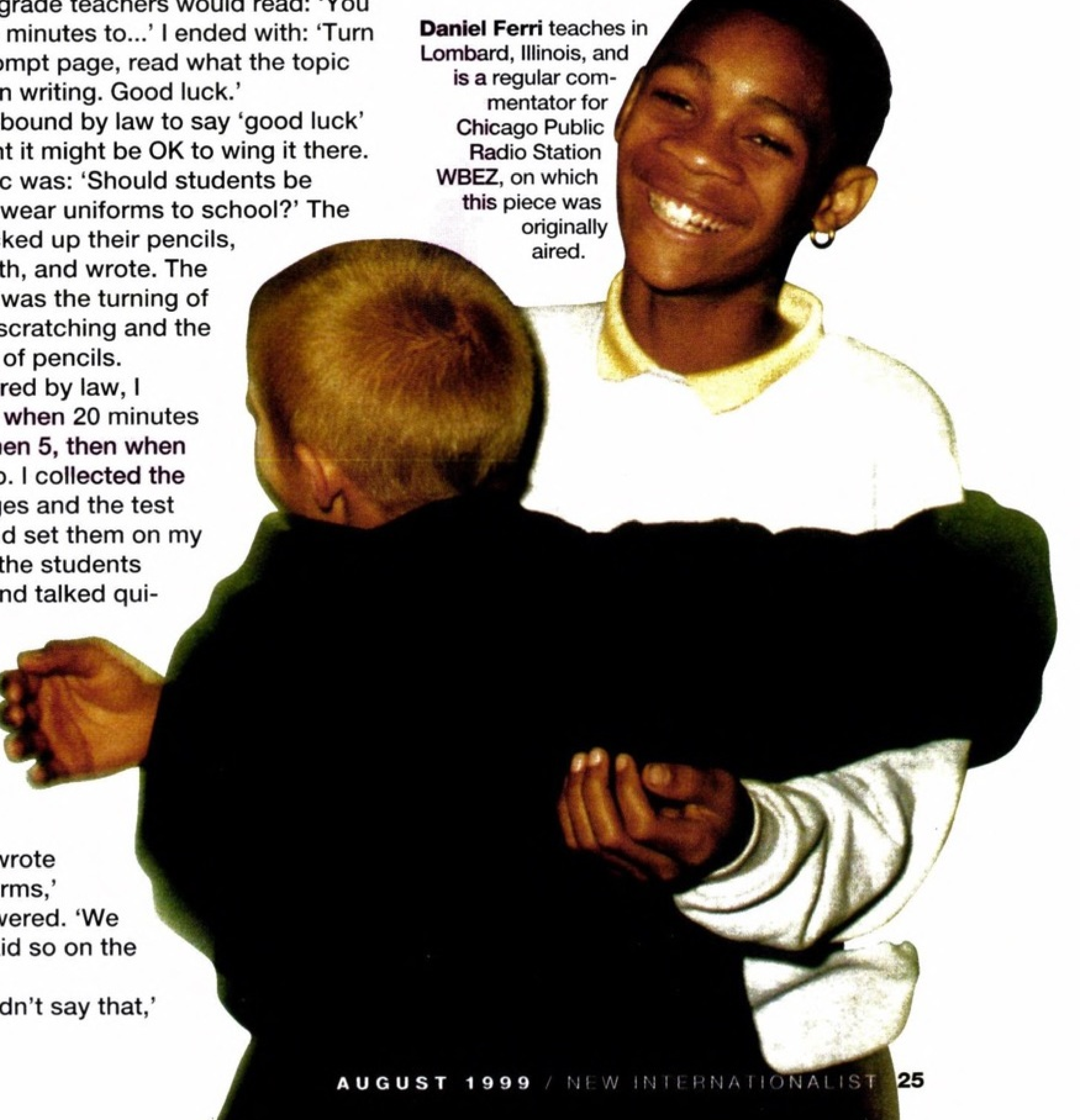
'See, right here, it says "Dancin' circles",' Duane said. 'So that's what I wrote about.'

That morning, thousands of sixth-graders across Illinois sat at their desks, curled themselves around their pencils, stuck their tongues between their teeth, and wrote five-paragraph essays about uniforms. All except one. His essay began: 'Well, I never thought much about dancin' circles before today, but if that's what you want to know about, well, here goes.'

Somewhere in North Carolina, some poor soul will reach into the stack of 500 essays they will read that day; 499 of them will be about wearing uniforms, and one will not. I would love to watch her face when she reads it.

There may still be hope. ■

Daniel Ferri teaches in Lombard, Illinois, and is a regular commentator for Chicago Public Radio Station WBEZ, on which this piece was originally aired.



MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

Class wars

Five young journalists aged between 13 and 17 from the international news service *Children's Express* visited Tanzania recently to look at the impact of debt. They found themselves returning over and again to the desperate state of education – and confronted the local World Bank representative with what they found. *Oliver Robertson, Amina Kibria, Juanita Rosenior, Duane O'Garro* and *Kierra Box* filed this report for the NI.

Kasim Masu is nine years old and sleeps on a step outside a shop. When we caught up with him at 7am in the Youth Cultural and Information Centre (YCIC), set back from the dusty streets in downtown Dar-es-Salaam, he was ironing his uniform for school. Funded largely by overseas agencies such as Christian Aid and Comic Relief, the Centre aims to develop sufficient confidence, trust and skills in young people to enable them to take control of their lives.

Kasim is just one beneficiary of the project's pre-school literacy booster classes and their bursaries for school fees. Faced with fees of at least 10,000 Tanzanian shillings ($16) a year for primary schooling, street kids and other children living in poverty have a fight on their hands to secure a way in. One of the most valuable aspects of YCIC is that it acts as a bridge, enabling vulnerable kids to make the transition to school.

Like all the young people we spoke to, getting a decent education was top of Kasim's list of wants. His personal ambition? He wanted to be clever so that he could become a pilot. Oliver commented: 'It was as though it was his dream literally to fly away from his current life, and he saw education as the way to do it. At one point, he felt he'd be able to do it, and then he said he wouldn't, and then he said he would again. I don't really know what to think of his chances.'

Though stoical, Kasim points out how a lack of funds for state schooling undermines children's own efforts: 'There are about 40 children in my class. We have some pencils, chalk and exercise books. But we have no sports equipment, the toilets are graffitied and there is no glass in the windows.

'We don't have enough, but we just keep going with what we have. Parents pay for some things, but the Government should pay for it all because they have more money than parents like mine. If your parents can't pay for equipment, you get expelled from school. I have friends who haven't been able to pay their fees. That makes me feel bad.'

BOTH PHOTOS: MATT WRIGHT

But the cost of schooling is not the only factor inhibiting the capacity of children like Kasim to learn. He told us that he has only one simple meal each day: 'I eat nothing until I go home when I have *ugali* [a stiff porridge made from flour and water]. I would like to eat more, but that's what I get so that's enough. I eat the same thing every day with seven of my friends. If I can't pay, sometimes my friends share. Otherwise, I go without.'

To people living in the developed world, the enormity of improving the education system in a country such as Tanzania, where six times the education budget is spent on debt repayments, may seem overwhelming. But Kasim's suggestions were modest. 'I would like a bigger classroom with an electric fan and more desks. I want to be more comfortable,' he shrugged.

His school's problems made the constant complaints we hear about British schools seem distinctly less significant. Kierra said: 'We moan when we have to share a textbook between two of us, but in Tanzania, there's only one book to a class and it's often outdated.'

Lost legacy

On the other side of town, we talked to half-a-dozen teenage girls who lived in rusting iron container ships in the Ferry area of the harbour. They scrape together a living through prostitution and feel their lives are the legacy of an education system that has failed them. When asked if there is a way out of prostitution, they said, 'There isn't, because we haven't been to school. We can't do anything else.'

Some had their education terminated at an early age when a parent died. Others came from families who simply didn't have the money to send them to school. One girl told us: 'When we did go to school, we didn't have uniforms, we didn't have books, we didn't have pencils. We didn't have anything to make us happy. We wanted to be like the others. We wanted to be able to compete with the others who go to school with uniforms and things like that.'

Yet, despite the great sadness we felt listening to the girls' stories, we discovered that their enthusiasm to learn how to better their lives wasn't dampened by the obvious lack of opportunities to do so. They said: 'We would like to proceed with our schooling. We would like to study in America. We don't know anything about it. We just know the white people we see coming from America have a good life. It would be better if we were there. Here it is a hard place, a horrible place.'

The second stage of our journey saw us travel to Morogoro, a large town about four hours' drive north-west of Dar-es-Salaam. There we discovered that fee-charging isn't the only major barrier to education. If a child isn't enrolled in school by the time they are seven or eight, it turns out they don't get another chance. We couldn't find out why the Government is so inflexible on this issue, but it doesn't seem unreasonable to guess that the policy is a cock-eyed mechanism for reducing the national education bill.

Streetside schooling

Fortunately, for some kids in Morogoro, there is an alternative. Psychologist and social worker Victor Mulimila runs the Streetside School, which guarantees a primary education for around 60 children. There is now enough money to pay Victor and when we met him and his pupils, they were about to move from an open-air yard, where breeze blocks were the only furniture and the seasonal rains would frequently wipe out lessons, to a purpose-built classroom.

As we had found in Dar-es-Salaam, the pupils were motivated and hard-working. Comparing their attitude to those of his own classmates, Duane was in awe. He commented: 'They know what to do and how to get on with their work. I looked at their maths books and they had so many ticks! You can see from what they do and the way they speak that they are learning.'

Things weren't always so. Prospective pupils and their relatives initially shunned Victor's attempts to recruit them. 'We would walk the streets looking for kids and people shouted at us,' he explained. 'People said we were thieves, that we wanted to keep their kids. The children would run away and cry, thinking we wanted to take their lives. Now all that's changed, but there are still lots of kids to help. We've also noticed that, slowly, some kids have stopped coming. When you make enquiries, you find that most are breadwinners. They are sent to the streets to look for whatever they can find to feed the family at home. We want to find money to provide loans to the parents so they can start their own income-generating activities. This would enable the children to come to school instead of going back on the streets to beg.'

The Streetside School, like

YCIC, is funded by foreign aid agencies. Victor is angry at the Government's lack of involvement. 'It seems as if the Government has withdrawn its obligation to these people as far as social services like education are concerned.'

Ethics vs economics

But he saves his greatest criticism for rich countries which continue to demand debt interest payments at debilitating levels. 'What we collect from taxes and other sources of income, we use to pay back our debts. Social services have been deteriorating because all the money which is supposed to pay for them is being paid to rich countries. The way I see the future, it's getting worse. We will be dying. The rich countries have to forgive all the debts — not just of Tanzania, but of all Third World countries. If they want to help, they shouldn't apply conditions that exploit us.'

Victor and the other Tanzanians we spoke to may well ask whose interests the international community and its agents have at heart. When we asked Ronald Brigish, the country representative of the World Bank, what would happen were Third World debt to be cancelled, he simply said: 'Very little one way or the other. The finances of the Bank would be very badly affected and we would eventually cease to exist.' Nothing then, about the likes of Kasim and the girls at the Ferry. Nothing about ethics – only economics.

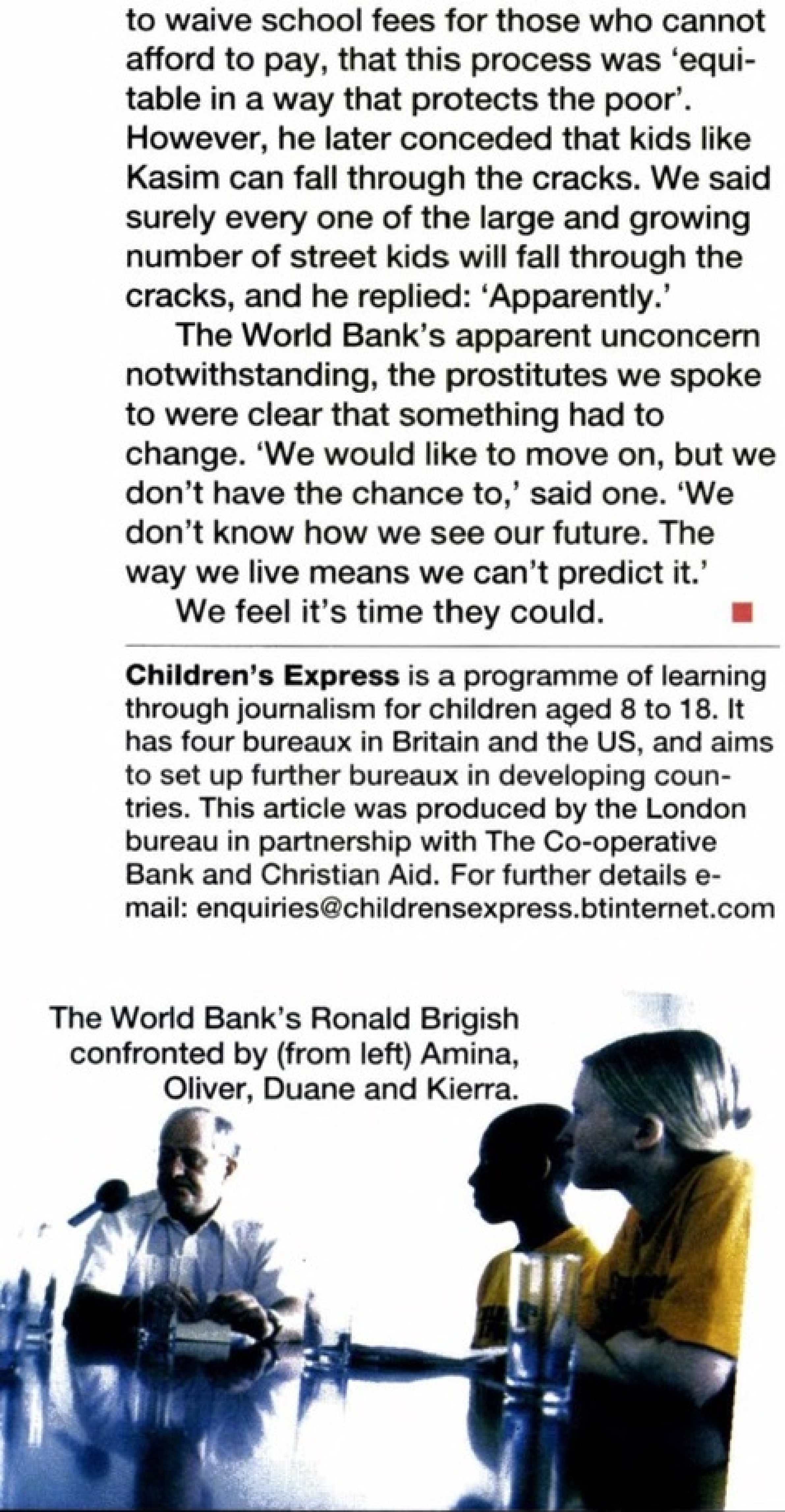
We probed what impact he thought the Bank's policies have on street kids. 'We don't know, quite frankly,' he said. He felt it was up to a community to decide whether to waive school fees for those who cannot afford to pay, that this process was 'equitable in a way that protects the poor'. However, he later conceded that kids like Kasim can fall through the cracks. We said surely every one of the large and growing number of street kids will fall through the cracks, and he replied: 'Apparently.'

The World Bank's apparent unconcern notwithstanding, the prostitutes we spoke to were clear that something had to change. 'We would like to move on, but we don't have the chance to,' said one. 'We don't know how we see our future. The way we live means we can't predict it.'

We feel it's time they could. ■

Children's Express is a programme of learning through journalism for children aged 8 to 18. It has four bureaux in Britain and the US, and aims to set up further bureaux in developing countries. This article was produced by the London bureau in partnership with The Co-operative Bank and Christian Aid. For further details e-mail: enquiries@childrensexpress.btinternet.com

The World Bank's Ronald Brigish confronted by (from left) Amina, Oliver, Duane and Kierra.



GIACOMO PIROZZI/PANOS PICTURES

Making it happen

Every child's right to schooling could be delivered if the world cared enough to make it happen. **Chris Brazier** ends his report on education North and South with a look at countries and campaigns that are making a difference.

NOTHING is more striking about our local school than the extremes it contains. At the one end, we have more than our share of children who can read before they even come through the door, with parents who are financially comfortable and are deeply committed to education, both at home and in school. At the other extreme are those children whose home life is a morass of poverty and problems. It often seems as though these children have no chance at all, and that a life of disadvantage, low expectations and trouble with the law has been preordained for them. And yet at least they have been offered a place in school as of right, even if sometimes they only want to kick out against it.

The children in the report on Tanzania that you have just read have no such opportunity. Nor do any of the other 275 million children in the world who have either never been to school or have dropped out without completing four years. Numbers of this kind are difficult to take in; it may help if you try to imagine the number of children of primary-school age in Europe and North America – and then double it.[1]

But do not assume for a moment that the scale of the problem makes it impossible to do anything about it. Every one of these children could be offered the schooling that is their fundamental right within a decade – and this issue of the *New Internationalist* forms part of a major campaign being mounted in both North and South to make sure that the world takes its responsibility more seriously than it has hitherto.

The liberation dream

On the eve of the millennium, we should not still be fighting this battle. Back in the 1960s and 1970s that same Tanzania by which the visiting child journalists were so shocked in *Class wars* was a beacon of hope for all those who believed in the liberation of the Third World, in a new international economic order. Tanzania under Julius Nyerere may have taken

These children from Mali even have to buy their own desks and carry them home for the holidays. Previous page: Rwandan children celebrate their return to school after the war.

BETTY PRESS/PANOS PICTURES

wrong turnings, built some of its new designs on sand, but what it embodied was the belief that 'development' meant first and foremost the development of human beings rather than of infrastructure or finance capital. A belief in education was at the heart of this, as Nyerere famously said in 1970: 'Education is not a way of escaping the country's poverty. It is a way of fighting it.'[1]

Education was no longer to be the province of an élite but was rather to reach out into the poorest home, the remotest rural area; it would be an engine driving economic development and allowing the independent nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America to claim their rightful status as equals in the global community.

A series of groundbreaking regional conferences organized by UNESCO set clear, bold targets. All eligible children were to be enrolled in primary school by 1980 – by 1970 in Latin America, where the existing provision was better. Nor was this mere rhetoric: primary enrolment more than doubled in Asia and Latin America over the two decades to 1980, while in Africa it tripled.[2] It still didn't deliver universal primary education, largely because no-one had foreseen the scale of the surge in population. So far so good, though.

But in the 1980s Tanzania and the Third World as a whole hit the rocks. Developing countries were crippled by debt repayments which ate up ever larger slices of their national income, not least because commodity prices plunged to an all-time low – by the middle of 1987 they were at their lowest level for 50 years.[3] The optimistic vision of the 1960s of a healthy, well-educated population creating their own momentum for development faded beside the grim reality of the bailiffs at the door.

Chief bailiffs were the IMF and the World Bank, who insisted on a raft of economic belt-tightening measures – including swingeing cuts in education spending. The impact was dramatic. Between 1980 and 1987, in Latin America and the Caribbean real spending per inhabitant plummeted by around 40 per cent and in sub-Saharan Africa by a catastrophic 65 per cent.[3] Teachers' salaries were slashed and school fees introduced in countries that had previously seen free primary education as paramount – and Tanzania was among them.

The dawn of the 1990s was supposed to represent the turning of the page. The World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 held out a new vision of education in the developing world that would boost the quality of schooling as well as the quantity. But it also set a new target date for universal primary education: the year 2000.

Yet despite all the action plans drawn up by more than 100 governments since Jomtien, despite the fact that education has been seen as central by every UN conference of the 1990s, we are still a dismally long way away from achieving 'Education for All'.

More depressing still, if the world progresses at its current pace, we will still be far from achieving it in 2015, which – you guessed it – is the latest in the ever-extendable line of target dates. This far-distant date emerged out of the UN Social Summit in 1995, and we may perhaps be forgiven for the cynical thought that it was selected in the knowledge that no-one currently in power will still be around to be blamed when the chickens of failure come home to roost.

Toys and rockets

The problem, we are continually told, is one of resources. Education simply costs too much. Yet look at the graphic on the facing page (*Barbarous priorities*). The best estimate of a price tag for achieving 'Education for All' in the next decade is eight billion dollars a year. This may seem an enormous sum. Yet it is only around half what Americans spend each year on toys. Even more telling, it is equivalent to just four days of global military spending, or just nine *minutes* of international currency speculation.[1]

This is the Great Education Scandal which gives this issue its title: that so many millions of children, so many family futures and hopeful horizons, are being sacrificed for want of such a small amount of money. Microsoft's Bill Gates could fund it out of his own pocket. More pertinently still, the Western governments that find their wallets mysteriously empty when it comes to the overseas aid budget (and who employ the IMF as loan shark to help fill them again), managed to find over $100 billion at the drop of a hat to be channelled through the IMF to the ailing economic giants of East Asia in the crisis of 1997-98.

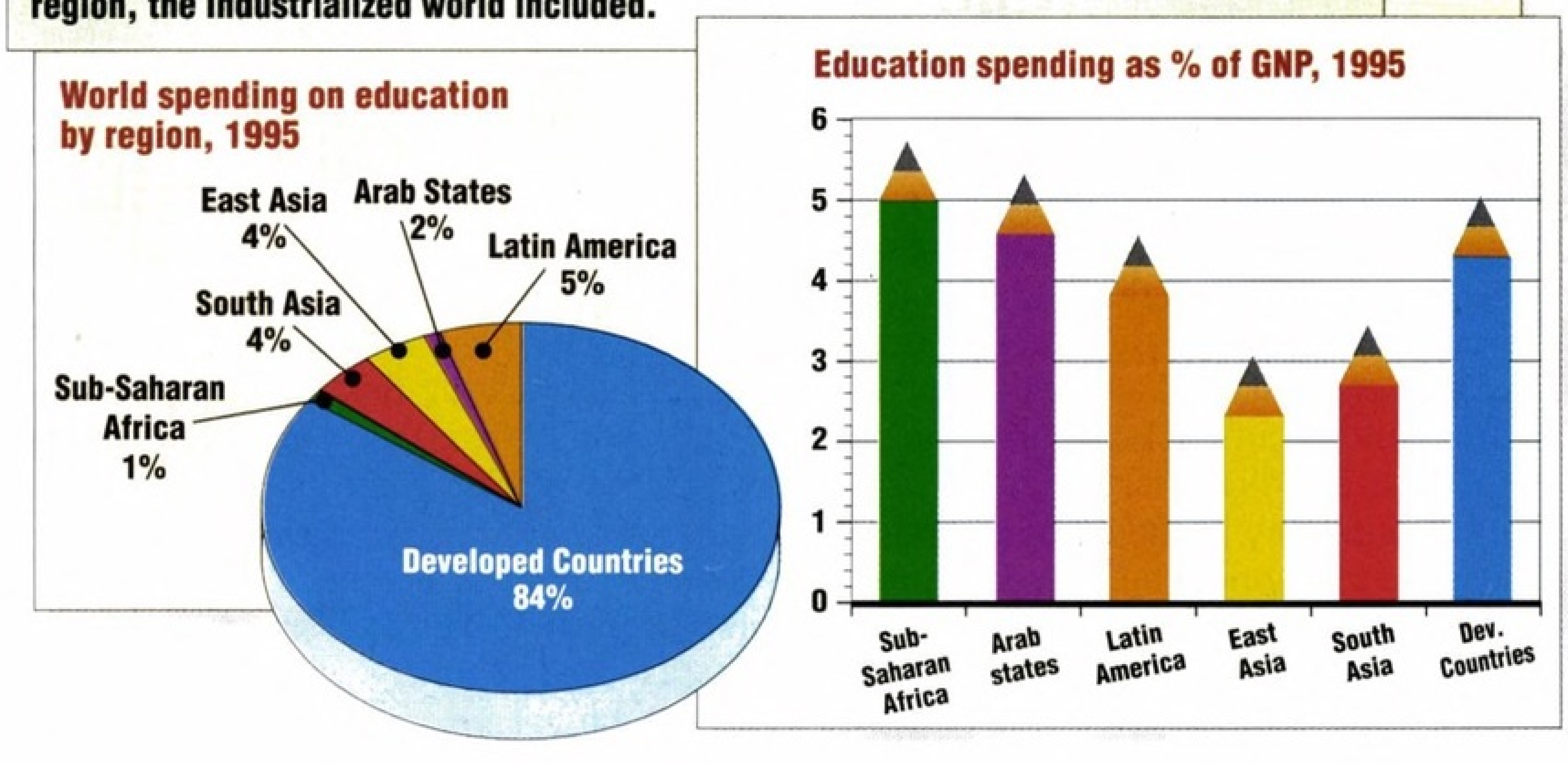
Now is the time to raise our voices. Deep in the bowels of the UN system and the development lobby the machinery is chugging away in its review of what went wrong with the 'Jomtien Decade', as regional meetings from October onwards prepare for the World Education Forum in Senegal in April next year. Meanwhile the UN Social Summit will also be reconvening in June 2000.

So what, you might say? These behind-the-scenes high-level processes seem impossible for you and I to influence. But an international campaign is gathering momentum North and South in which we can participate and which could yet make a difference. The great strength of this coalition is that it stretches right the way up from villages in Africa and Asia to policy analysts working hard to influence the global movers and shakers in Washington and New York.

Oxfam International, which has just launched a major campaign called Education Now, has not historically been much involved in education, feeling that this was the responsibility of governments. But over the last decade it has found consistently at village level that one of the key issues people raised was the cost of schooling. As a result it is using its influence at the international lobbying level to bring big players like UNICEF and the World Bank on board with its proposed Global Action Plan to ensure universal primary education by 2015.

The lion's share

Africa accounts for only 1% of world education spending, compared with rich countries' 84%. Yet Africa contributes a greater share of its income to education than any other region, the industrialized world included.



Charge sheet

So who should be prosecuted for the world's educational failures?

The UN
Always accentuates the positive and is loath to castigate even where it is due. Could be accused of collusion. But until it has teeth it won't be able to bite the hands that should be feeding Education for All.

Northern governments
Of the minimal amount the North gives in aid to basic education, 60 per cent is still tied to the products and services of its own companies. They have dragged their feet on debt relief and colluded with cuts in education spending. Recommend prosecution.

World Bank
Has a prior conviction for the damage it did to education in the 1980s in cahoots with the IMF. In the 1990s the World Bank is trying hard. But it still talks better than it performs and needs to realign itself around the human-development agenda of new godfathers Wolfensohn and Stiglitz. But that will mean squealing on its former co-conspirator, the IMF – is it ready for that?

The IMF
Guilty as charged of throwing the movement towards universal primary education off the rails in the 1980s with arrogantly designed adjustment programmes that insisted on cuts in education. If only one suspect were to be charged, this should be it.

Majority World governments
Some are doing all they can and given debt relief and encouragement could work wonders. Others, though, have manifestly failed to invest what resources they have in education – and those with sky-high military budgets (stand up, Pakistan) should be charged.

Educationists
The charges against them have been laid by right-wing opportunists suspicious of the laudable desire to teach children how to question things. They have continued to work at new ideas to improve education – though they should kick up more fuss about underfunding. Recommend release.

At the same time it aims to mobilize a campaign that takes 'Education for All' out of a caring ghetto rarely noticed by the general public.

Education is life

To that end it is joining forces with the Elimu campaign, which is represented in the North by ActionAid but whose driving force comes from the South. Elimu (a Swahili-derived rendering of 'education is life') is an attempt to reclaim education from the politicians and bureaucrats who have so mishandled it over the four decades of development so far. Coalitions including teachers' unions, women's organizations and religious groups have been formed in Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Benin, Togo, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Brazil and Peru to ensure that governments and aid donors fulfil their promises to the poor on the right to education.

In Ghana, for example, more than 20 organizations came together in March to launch a nationwide campaign, focusing primarily on the rising costs of schooling in a country which has been under the cosh of structural adjustment for two decades. 'No-one should be excluded because they cannot pay, nor should the poor be condemned to poor-quality education,' said keynote speaker Rev Dr Aboagye-Mensah.

Other African countries have already boldly proved that it does not have to be this way. When Malawi finally overthrew its dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda after three decades, one of the new democratic government's first acts was to make primary schooling free for all children in 1994. The effect was dramatic. Whereas only 45 per cent of children made it into primary school in 1985, suddenly almost all children were given access. The problems attached to the policy were and still are huge, of course – from finding enough new teachers (over half the primary teachers in Malawi are untrained) to discovering cheaper ways of building schools with local materials (a new design was found that cost a quarter of the standard cement model recommended by the World Bank). And quality may have been to some extent sacrificed to quantity.

But Malawi's example shows what is possible. It helped inspire Uganda to follow a similar path in guaranteeing free primary schooling to four children per family – and Uganda has since ploughed the first fruits of debt relief (it is one of the very few so far to have received any such relief) into funding its free education policy, charting another course that could be followed by highly indebted African countries if only they were given the chance to climb off the rack.

We are back inescapably to economics. As we look forward to the new century buoyed up by those inevitable images of bright-eyed children hungry to learn, it should not have to come down to money. Instead of struggling to make ends meet, of looking for new budget cuts or ways of picking parents' pockets, as schools are having to do both North and South, we should be able to focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning – and on educating children to be critical thinkers rather than clones, active democrats rather than drones.

The last word on education should always go to a child. In January this year, as part of Elimu's campaign in India, poor children from New Delhi and the surrounding areas turned the tables on bureaucrats and scholars as they talked about the barriers between them and high-quality education. Taking the microphone to address the national Education Secretary, one boy asked the question that none of us should ever become too weary or too sophisticated to ask: 'If the Government has money to explode nuclear bombs, why doesn't it have money to build schools?'[4] ■

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1 *The Internationalist*, No 1, 1970. 2 Christopher Colclough with Keith Lewin, *Educating All the Children*, Clarendon Press 1993. 3 *State of the World's Children 1999*, UNICEF. 4 Elimu Newsletter, Spring 1999.

To be in proportion, this column of coins would continue for another 427 pages.

Barbarous priorities

The cost of achieving 'Education for All' in the next decade is eight billion dollars a year. This may seem an enormous sum. Yet it is only around half what Americans spend each year on toys. Even more telling, it is equivalent to just four days of global military spending, or just nine minutes of international currency speculation.

Annual spending

- **Education for All (extra needed)** *Source: Oxfam International/UNICEF*
- **Toys spending (US only)** *Source: Toy Manufacturers of America*
- **Military spending (world)** *Source: SIPRI*
- **International currency speculation** *Source: UNDP*

ACTION on EDUCATION

Oxfam International

Oxfam's campaign 'Education Now: Break the Cycle of Poverty' has five core proposals:

1 A Global Action Plan to ensure that the target of universal primary education by the year 2015 is achieved.

2 Earlier and deeper debt reduction, with savings invested in basic education.

3 More and better aid for basic education, from both the World Bank and Northern governments.

4 Integrating human development into IMF and World Bank programmes so as to protect access to basic education.

5 Action by governments in developing countries, including removing school fees, converting military expenditure and improving teaching quality.

Global Week of Action

A worldwide alliance of teachers' unions and non-governmental organizations is mounting a Global Week of Action on the right to high-quality public education. Scheduled for the run-up to the April 2000 World Education Conference in Dakar, Senegal, the aim is to put more pressure on aid donors and governments. Among the parallel events will be e-mail petitions, school-to-school solidarity links and a relay race to 'pass the torch of learning' around the world. For more details contact one of the organizations on the steering committee: ActionAid, Education International or Oxfam International (see below).

ST HEDGEHOGS
RETURN TO SENDER

JACKY CHAPMAN / FORMAT

Elimu

Elimu is a grassroots campaign co-ordinated by ActionAid which strengthens the capacity of Southern organizations (from national bodies to local parent-teacher associations) to speak out on education issues. But to mark the last Literacy Day of the twentieth century – and address the fact that nearly one billion adults will enter the new millennium unable to read and write – Elimu is asking people in Northern countries to send postcards to their local parliamentary representative. Elimu's suggested text is:

'I have recently become aware of the global crisis in education. Around 125 million children across the developing world receive no primary schooling at all. One in four adults are illiterate. I am concerned that the poor are being denied their right to a good education. I support Elimu's "Education is Life" campaign. Please urge the Government to increase aid to basic education in the poorest countries, and to end the practice of "tied" aid (requiring that aid be spent on goods and services in the donor country).'

Contact Elimu via ActionAid (see Britain *below).*

CONTACT POINTS

INTERNATIONAL

Education International is the international federation of teachers' unions. Post: 155 boulevard Emile-Jacqmain (8), 1210 Brussels, Belgium.
Tel: +32 2 224 0611. Fax: +32 2 224 0606. E-mail: educint@ei-ie.org
Web: www.ei-ie.org

Elimu Web: www.elimu.org
Contact by phone, fax or mail via ActionAid (see *Britain*, below)

Oxfam International Contact via your local country office, below.

AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Oxfam NZ is the best local contact point for the Oxfam International and Elimu campaigns. Post: PO Box 68-357, Newton, Auckland 1032.
Tel: +64 9 358 1480. Fax: +64 9 358 1481. E-mail: oxfam@oxfam.org.nz

AUSTRALIA

Community Aid Abroad is the best local contact point for the Oxfam International and Elimu campaigns. Post: 156 George St, Fitzroy, Vic 3065. Tel: +61 3 9289 9444. Fax: +61 3 9419 5318. E-mail: enquire@caa.org.au

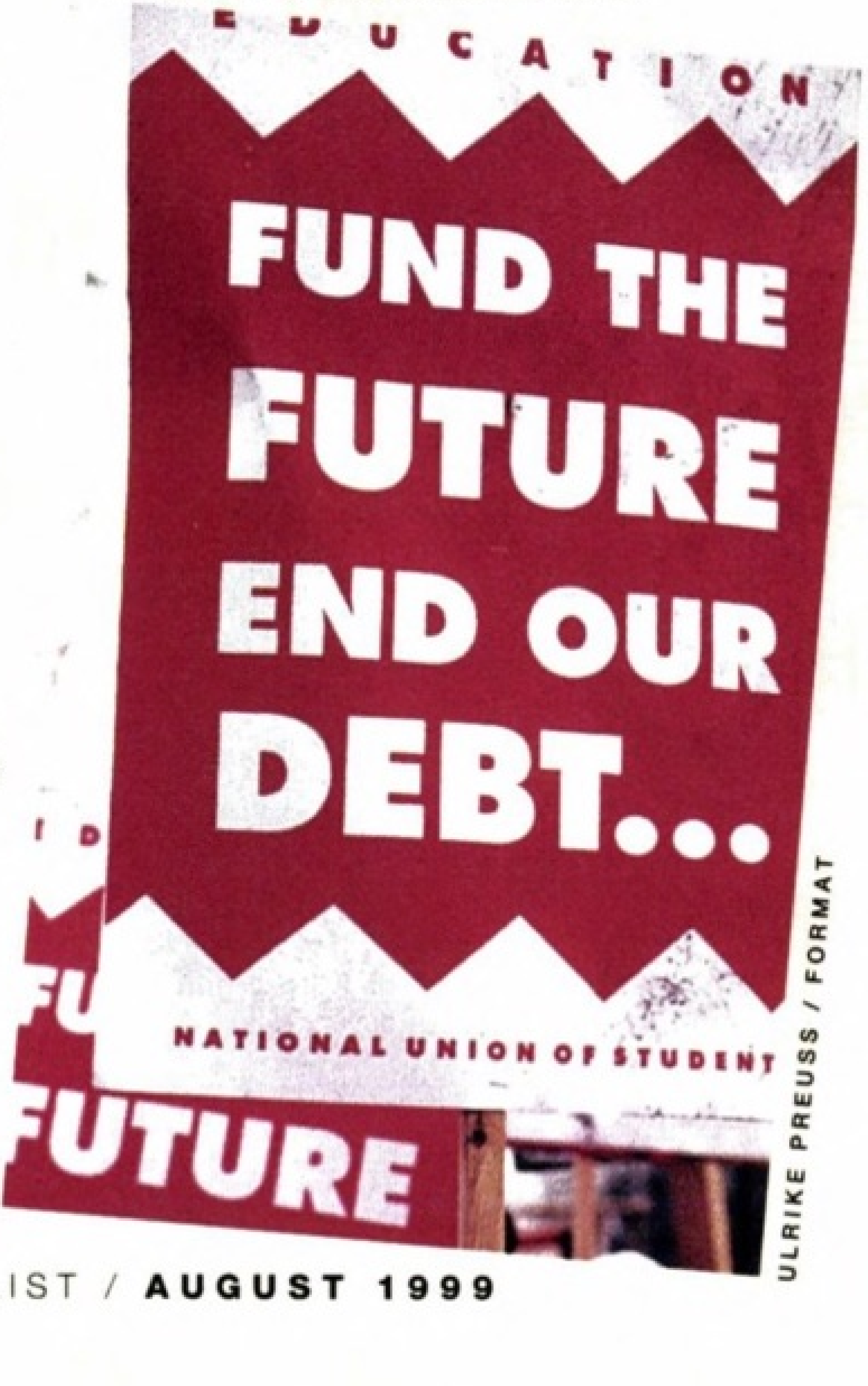
Australian Education Union is the national umbrella body for all state teachers' unions and is the best resource for campaigning. There are strong state offices but the federal office can be contacted at: Post: PO Box 1158, South Melbourne, Victoria 3205. Tel: +61 3 9254 1800.
Fax: +61 3 9254 1805. E-mail: aeu@edunions.labor.net.au
Web: www.edunions.labor.net.au

Yunggorendi First Nations Centre of Higher Education & Research supports the access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to tertiary study and establishes an environment where their history and culture can be respected. Tel: +61 8 8201 3033. Web: adminwww.flinders.edu.au/studentinfo/yunggorendi.html

BRITAIN

ActionAid and its European sibling agencies facilitate the Elimu campaign in the North. Its literacy programme, Reflect, has broken new ground all over the world. It is working with British and Irish anti-poverty groups to organize Elimu consultations highlighting the growing education inequalities in the North. Post: Hamlyn House, Macdonald Road, Archway, London N19 5PG. Tel: +44 207 561 7561. Fax: +44 207 272 0899.
E-mail: mail@actionaid.org.uk
Web: www.actionaid.org

Human Scale Education is an organization dedicated to encouraging new initiatives and experiments, including smaller schools or learning projects and home learning. It is organizing an **Alternatives in Education Fair** in London on 25 September. Post: 96 Carlingcott, Nr Bath BA2 8AW. Tel/Fax: +44 1972 510709. E-mail:hse@clara.net
Web: www.hse.home.clara.net



ULRIKE PREUSS / FORMAT

Oxfam Great Britain 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, England OX2 7DZ.
Tel: +44 1865 311 311. Fax: +44 1865 312 600. E-mail: oxfam@oxfam.org.uk
Web: www.oneworld.org/oxfam

A conference – 'Facing the Global Crisis in Education' – will be held by ActionAid and Oxfam in London on 8 Sept 1999.

CANADA

Oxfam Canada is the best local contact point for the Oxfam International and Elimu campaigns. Post: Suite 300-294 Albert St, Ottawa, Ont K1P 6E6.
Tel: +1 613 237 5236. Fax: +1 613 237 0524. E-mail: oxfam@web.net

CODE (Canadian Organization for Development Through Education) supports the formal education system in parts of Africa. Post: 321 Chapel St, Ottawa, Ont K1N 7Z2. Tel: +1 613 232 3569. Fax: +1 613 232 7435.

People for Education This activist group defends Ontario's besieged education system. Post: PO Box 64, Station P, Toronto, Ont M5S 2S6. Tel: +1 416 410 3571. E-mail: P4E@mailcity.com

IRELAND

ACTIONAID Ireland Unity Buildings, 16-17 Lower O'Connell St, Dublin 1. Tel: +353 1 878 7911. Fax: +353 1 878 6245.
E-mail: actionaidireland@tinet.ie

Oxfam in Ireland 19 Clanwilliam Terrace, Dublin 2. Tel: +66 1 8544. Fax: +66 1 8568. E-mail: oxfamie@indigo.ie

UNITED STATES

Oxfam America is the best local contact point for the Oxfam International and Elimu campaigns. Post: 26 West St, Boston, MA 02111-1206. Tel: +1 617 482 1211. Fax: +1 617 728 2595.
E-mail:oxfamusa@igc.apc.org

CACE (Center for the Analysis of Commercialism in Education) An invaluable website which tracks the incursions of the education-for-profit companies.
www.uwm.edu/Dept/CACE/

WORTH READING

The US quarterly **Rethinking Schools** is a treasure trove of thoughtful writing by progressive teachers who have to deal with the right-wing education offensive from day to day. One-year subscriptions within the US are $12.50. Post: 1001 E Keefe Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53212. Tel: +44 1 414 964 9646. Fax: +1 414 964 7220. E-mail: rsbusiness@aol.com
Web: www.rethinking schools.org

Jonathan Kozol's **Savage Inequalities** (Harper Perennial) from 1991 remains a blistering indictment of the injustice built into US schooling, while Sandro Contenta's **Rituals of Failure** (Between the Lines 1993) paints a similarly bleak picture of Canadian schools.

Teacher and writer Chris Searle has unfailingly promoted a radical, internationalist education agenda in Britain for three decades. **None but our words** (Open University Press, Buckingham and Philadelphia 1999) looks back on key incidents and insights in a life inspired by the great Brazilian literacy activist Paulo Freire, author of the classic **Pedagogy of the Oppressed,** who died last year.

The work of Howard Gardner (notably **Multiple Intelligences**, Basic Books, New York, 1993) remains a fascinating corrective to those politicians who believe children will benefit from a return to Victorian teaching values. What we should all be doing is looking forward rather than back and Edmund O'Sullivan's book **Transformative Vision for Education in the New Century** (Zed 1999) does just that, putting ecology, justice and the human spirit in the forefront.

The NI Interview

Robyn Archer

Paul Rees catches up with one of Australia's cultural whirlwinds.

When Robyn Archer was appointed Director of the Adelaide Arts Festival one commentator remarked sarcastically that Australia was about to be dealt a mess of 'Marxist Agit-Prop'. Not quite. Oh, the political themes were there all right, but the 1998 Adelaide Festival was much more than that. In fact, it was generally heralded as a sublime artistic achievement. Archer's programme tapped into what she perceived as the 'big questions' at the close of the twentieth century. The search for meaning was everywhere – from a radical interpretation of the Old Testament by an Israeli theatre company to a Southeast Asian dance company inspired by Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha.*

"I think it's problematic if you only ever treat the arts as a source of entertainment"

PAUL REES

Dressed in a black turtleneck with spiky red hair, Robyn Archer is a multi-talented renaissance figure: a feminist singer-songwriter, an actor, a theatre director, a cultural activist and a political animal – though with a proudly non-party line.

'I'm more of a dangerous individualist,' she quips. 'I never believed that a political position was death to an artist's career, although there has always been advice around to that effect. I decided early on never to hide my politics or my sexuality.'

Today she is deeply disturbed by the steamroller effect of a market-driven global culture. This globalization process, she warns, is wearing down the rough edges of art and creating a kind of bland uniformity. In a blatant call to arms Archer stresses that 'artists have a duty to open up the cracks and to live and create from within them'.

'The arts still remain a place where you can indulge in ethical debates and finer feelings. Even if you feel there is no longer any scope in the world for being an ethical person, the arts can be truly cathartic. That's because the best art will put you in a deeply questioning space where you just have to dismiss the rubbish that surrounds you and get down to the basics, the bottom line of humanity.'

This belief draws from her conviction that important artists are also philosophers. And there are not many spaces left in a baldly commercial world where you can take a philosophical approach. 'Most education is just a training ground for a career,' she sighs remorsefully. Archer supported her early artistic career as a teacher. 'There's not a lot of space to put yourself on the "other side" and test out what you really feel. In that sense arts is a realm of philosophy. People who don't use the arts like this are probably not artists. They're commercial entertainers, but they are not philosophers.'

Archer is a strong believer in public funding of the arts. And she supports her views with an authority you imagine would leave many bureaucrats quaking. Because 'if you let the arts go you let philosophy go and we abandon ourselves to a world where there are no challenging, risky questions being asked'. Without this kind of 'rigorous' art Archer predicts an 'atrophy of creative muscle and of intellectual muscle in an economically rationalized world'.

In order to remain relevant and vibrant Archer says the arts must reflect the flux of social change. She believes that young people are ignored by what she calls 'outmoded forms of cultural exchange'.

'Theatre, opera and symphony orchestras are having hard economic times everywhere,' she says. 'They're wondering where their traditional audience has gone. Well, they are basically getting old and dying. A new public has already developed new ways in which it wants to experience the arts. I'm not suggesting that all traditional arts will die, but you'd be foolish to think you could carry on in the same way forever.'

For arts enthusiasts she has this advice: 'Try to step outside the notion of going to shows that you are dead certain will be terrific. It's probably a revival of something you've already seen or it's a playwright who's been around for 20 years. Or it's music you're completely familiar with so you're sticking to what you know. A more enlightened response would be always to try to move out of your comfort zone. I think it's problematic if you only ever treat the arts as a source of entertainment.'

Though Robyn has thrived in cultural centres like London and Berlin she got her start in Australia's Working Men's Clubs, small-town venues scattered across the vast country which even today remain the bread-and-butter for comics and singers just starting out. She assures me that the rapport between the audience at those clubs and the lesbian anarchist up on stage was something special. 'There was a mutual respect,' she recalls. 'My working-class roots in the west of Adelaide no doubt helped. That plus the common love of a good old knees-up.'

But what of her artistic vision today? 'As you get older and quieter you see more. You see certain performers going on being what they always were and a public demanding that you be what you always were. It happens with actors and rock singers and at some point that becomes very sad, sort of an unnatural elongation of adolescence. I think in some ways political anger can be characterized in the same way. You can find some people who do maintain the rage but quite often it's just a question of image rather than conviction.'

For Robyn Archer the conviction still comes first. ■

Paul Rees is a Welsh-born writer living and working in Adelaide, South Australia.

Reviews

music

Sosabi: Cape Verdean Music from New England

by **Various**
(Rounder 5069 CD)

Café Atlantico

by **Cesaria Evora**
(RCA Victor 74321 65401 2 CD)

Evora: sixty-something and still magnificent.

That Cape Verde, the former Portuguese archipelago perched on Africa's Atlantic edges, has always lived a precarious existence caught between geography, history and economics is somehow reflected in its distinctive and haunting music. Cape Verde was once a port used by slave ships *en route* to the Americas, and its songs are tinged with Latin inflections, soft jazz rumbas and a vocal style dominated by the bitter-sweet and sensuous longings of the blues-like *morna* tradition. They possess a fierce sense of individuality that makes them shine brightly. There's very rarely any high drama sounded out in explicit drum rolls or vocal flourishes, but the passion can never be doubted.

Cesaria Evora – sixty-something and still magnificently miserable – is Cape Verde's biggest star, but her constellation shouldn't be allowed to outshine her compatriots. **Sosabi** – Verdean creole for 'that's great' – celebrates an extraordinary connection with America, and in particular New England, that continues to the present day. The first Africans to relocate to America of their free will, Verdeans have figured on the eastern seaboard since 1643. As in any relocation, how permanent their exile was intended to be is not easy to say; perhaps it's best to let the music speak for itself. The musicians collected here – Toi Grace, Celina Pereira, Alberto Kinzinhu Rodrigues and others – present the affirmation of a Verdean diaspora as a vibrant entity, where the sadness of dislocation or loss is subsumed under free-floating dance tracks whose smooth rhythms are evidence of a first-hand acquaintance with a Cuban feeling for movement. **Sosabi** has – make no mistake – first-rate performances and sly, lilting songs that speak much for the fusion of European and African music within a unique identity that's still very much alive.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

What can one say about Cesaria Evora, the undoubted 'queen of the *morna*', that hasn't been said already? A magic happens when Evora, Cape Verde's barefoot diva, opens her mouth. For over 40 years, this cigarette-smoking, whisky-drinking granny has made into an art form the slow modulations of *morna* and their poetic heart. Like the best of divas, she personifies depth and resilience with – it has to be said – a sharp humour that sometimes beggars belief.

The images conjured up in: 'The first time/That I went to Ribeira Grande/I had a wild time/In a goods storeroom,' is just hilarious. **Café Atlantico** is a fiction of an imaginary café at the end of the world, a place for ruined lovers, late-night revellers and, perhaps, those at the end of their tethers. Evora's voice has the best smoky ambience to set the scenes and a majestic band to go with it. In fact, there's very little that's really lugubrious about this album: a fabulous ten-piece Cuban band lays down a fiery pace that makes **Café Atlantico** an album to cherish until the end of time.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

LG

books

Women in the New Asia

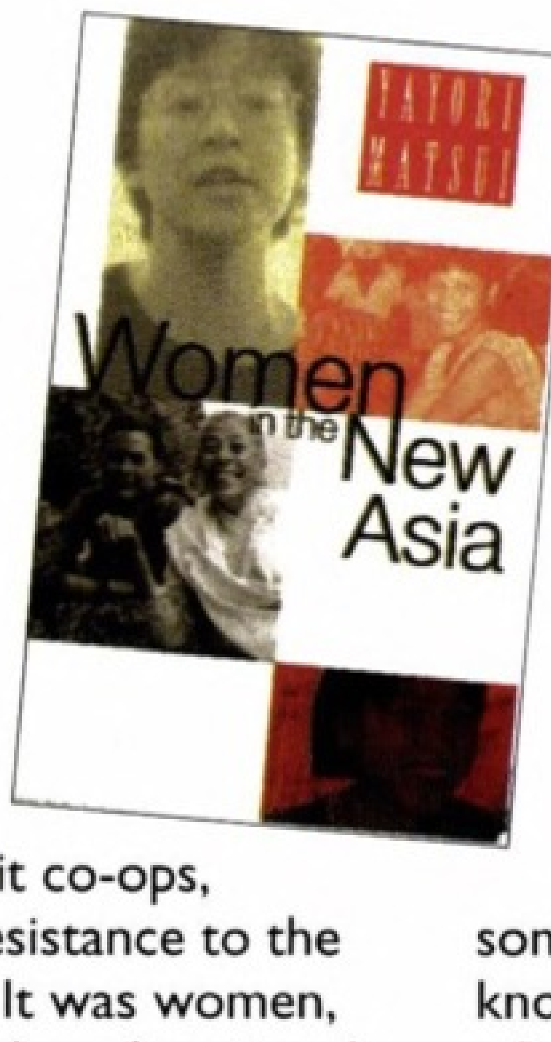
by **Yayori Matsui**
(Spinifex/ Zed Books, ISBN 1 85649 6260)

Facing the Mirror

edited by **Ashwini Sukthankar**
(Penguin India)

The Drag King Book

by **Del LaGrace Volcano and Judith Jack Halberstam**
(Serpent's Tail ISBN 185242 601)



With an unsettling blend of pain and optimism, journalist Yayori Matsui charts the course of Asian women's movements over the past two decades. As co-founder of Asia-Japan Women's Resource Centre and editor of *Women's 21st Century*, she is well equipped for the task.

Asia is home to the largest number of the world's impoverished women. Despite the region's recent economic boom, there has been a widespread feminization of poverty in most of its countries. This has been matched by the continuing, if not increasing, infringement of human rights for women, including domestic violence and female infanticide.

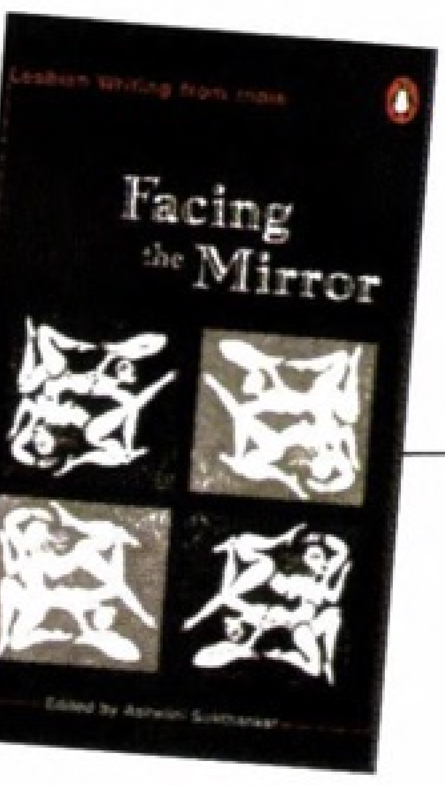
In **Women in the New Asia** Matsui balances these tragedies with heartening stories of women's credit co-ops, democratic movements and resistance to the 'dictatorship of development'. It was women, she says, who took the lead in Japan's national anti-pollution struggle and peace movements in the early 1970s. It was largely Korean women who protested against their country's dictatorship and against its patriarchy, despite threat of torture and imprisonment.

It was Thai women who took to the streets over the confiscation of land and Cambodian women who took the helm to rebuild their nation. And it is the regions' women who are protesting against the rise of religious fundamentalism which she sees as a major instigator of anti-women violence. Matsui's insights are strong balm; her alternative ways of seeing, the gentlest of rejoinders. They deserve to be widely read.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

GF

Facing the Mirror is about women in the new India. To be specific, it's about those women who have been the most effectively silenced of all, marginalized by omission even in equality-conscious, gender-and-development books: lesbians. This collection is something of a milestone, dealing with the experience of Indian lesbians across caste, religion and to some extent class and region, too. And it knocks on the head the arguments of those who would rather believe that homosexuality in India – and other Majority World countries – is some kind of 'Western import', like champagne for élites. Bringing together fact, fiction, analysis, confessionals and oral testimony, **Facing the Mirror** is a labour of love – and courage – by editor Ashwini Sukthankar and its scores of contributors. In literary terms it's patchy, but there's a raw energy and a wry humour that may wring a smile from even the straightest quarters. That's not to disregard the cruelty and daily grind of repression, discrimination and persecution that also permeate these pages, regardless of social class. A



Bombayite working in advertising, for example, relates how she has to change jobs each time her sexuality is discovered because of the mistrust and hostility this inevitably produces in hitherto friendly workmates. But there are tales of chuckle-inducing subversion too. For example, the testimony of a poor Muslim village girl, sold into marriage to a rich, repellent, much older man. Life looks unutterably bleak until she finds love, passion and protection in the arms of his eldest wife who also, somehow, manages to keep hubby firmly booted out of the conjugal nest!

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ VB

Here's one in the eye for those of a nervous disposition. Accessible, adroit and most certainly mischievous, photographer Del LaGrace Volcano and academic Judith Jack Halberstam's picture book is nothing if not serious. Drag kings, logic would tell us, are the female equivalent of drag queens: women who go beyond the ambivalent, unisex dress codes of jeans and t-shirts and slap on moustaches, three-piece suits and if they're really transgressive a shot of the drug of choice, testosterone. And, if that's all you want to see, **The Drag King Book** contains plenty of photos of them.

But, as its authors make clear, for all the studied fun that comes with crossing gender genres and playing with boundaries, drag and its close companion, transgression, are serious affairs, raising overtly social and political questions about gender and identity. **The Drag King Book** is not a study, to use Halberstam's phrase, of the 'mechanics of change' and neither is it a prurient book. LaGrace Volcano's photographs, which include studies of performance artist Diane Torr, film-maker Hans Schierl and club kids from Europe and the US amongst many self-portraits, are simultaneously sympathetic and challenging. Engaging directly with the hottest gender study (for more, see Halberstam's new book *Female Masculinity*, published by Duke University Press), it's a book about the multiplicity of gender and its performance in the modern world. Freakish? No. Stimulating? Most certainly.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆ LG

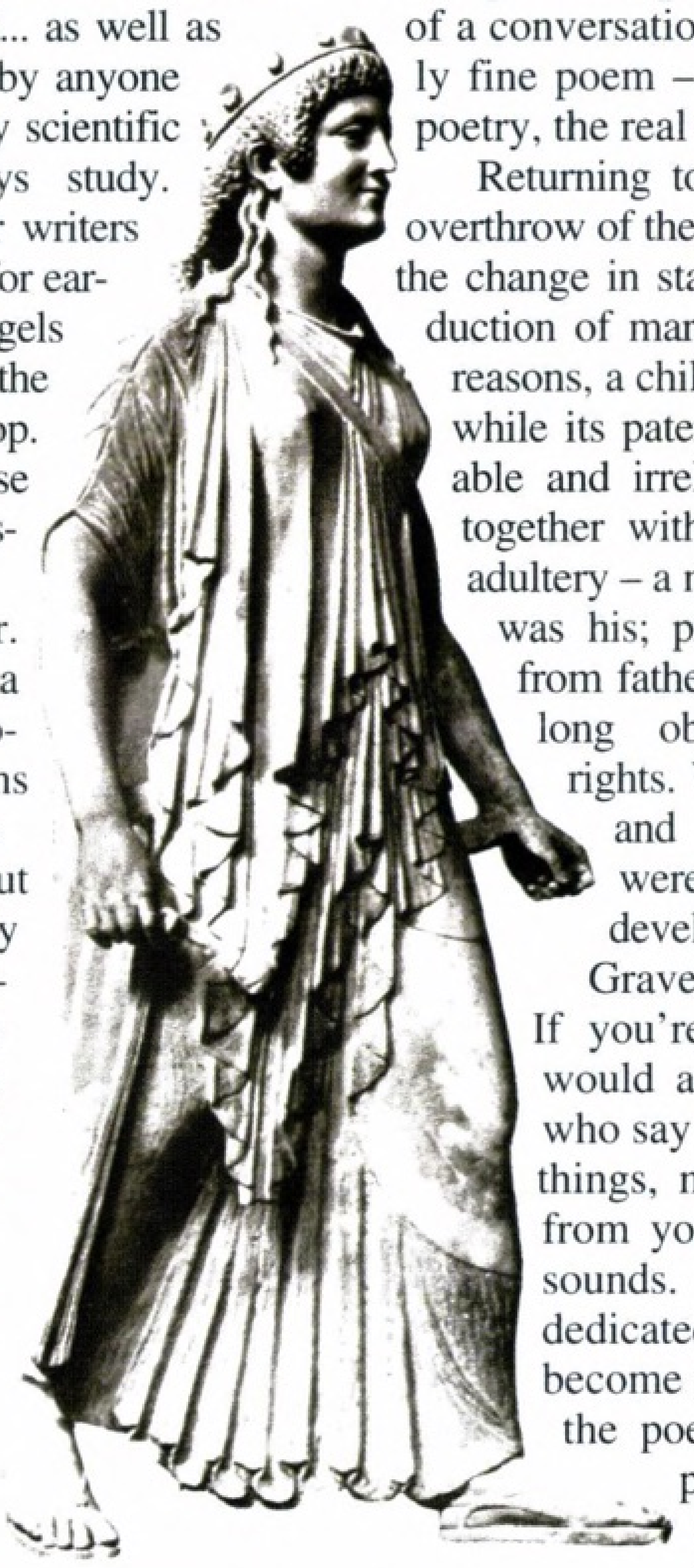
STAR RATING

Excellent	☆☆☆☆☆
Very good	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆
Poor	☆

THE CLASSIC

The White Goddess

... being the book that looks slantwise at deity and poetry.



Robert Graves' **The White Goddess** is subtitled 'a historical grammar of poetic myth'. If you assume from this that it is not an easy book to read, you assume correctly. Graves himself in his foreword warns that the book is 'difficult... as well as queer' and should be 'avoided by anyone with a distracted, tired or rigidly scientific mind'. Nevertheless, it repays study. There are both earlier and later writers who have had similar themes – for earlier, see Frazer, Harrison, Engels and Briffault; for later, see 'the goddess' shelf of any book shop. But it is with Graves that these ideas are most complete, consistent, logical and authoritative.

Graves was a prolific writer. His prose included essays, a compendium of myth, short stories and novels, and translations of the classics from languages from Attic Greek to Arabic. But his prose, although carefully researched and written, was little more than a livelihood to him. He named himself a poet before anything else, and cared only that his best poems should survive him. Although prose, **The White Goddess** is oddly poetic; it works in a different dimension from any other book you'll ever read, with the familiar-yet-elusive urgency of the best poems. Graves calls it 'looking slantwise' at something: poets do it habitually; readers – if they are lucky – occasionally and despite themselves.

According to Graves, Goddess-worshipping civilizations once covered Europe, at least, and their echoes can be heard in the myths and customs of successive patriarchal states right down to the present day. These echoes are either deliberate misinterpretations of older forms, such as the masculinization of Sophia, the Goddess of Wisdom, as the Holy Ghost by Christianity. Or they are poetic riddles, left as time capsules by honest poets for their successors. Graves claims that by using what he calls 'the analeptic method' – the recovery of lost events by means of the suspension of time – the poet or the mythographer can solve the poetic riddles and bring the older world back to life. Clearly this is 'looking slantwise' again.

But Graves is not an occultist in any shape or form, nor even a mystic. He is concerned with logic and facts, both of which he handles scrupulously. True, the analeptic method is a form of evocation or trance; but in Graves' hands even that is rigorous. For example, a whole chapter is given to his analeptic self's recreation of a conversation that supposedly took place in AD 43, during which many historical riddles are solved. But Graves' only interest is a single practical problem – two lines missing from a poem, supplied at the very end of a conversation. Spookily, it is a particularly fine poem – TS Eliot later called it 'real poetry, the real thing'.

Returning to the historical argument: the overthrow of the goddess by male gods reflects the change in status of women with the introduction of marriage. Previously, for obvious reasons, a child's maternity had been certain while its paternity had always been 'debatable and irrelevant'. But with marriage – together with laws punishing women for adultery – a man could be more sure a child was his; property and title now passed from father to son, and men began their long obsessions with reproductive rights. Women's role in reproduction and indeed women themselves were marginalized – a theme developed by many feminists since.

Graves writes primarily for poets. If you're not a poet – and Graves would argue that most among those who say they are, aren't – then certain things, mysteries, are forever hidden from you. This is less élitist than it sounds. True, only highly trained, dedicated and gifted individuals can become poets. But even then, it is not the poet that produces a particular poem; the poet is just taking dictation, and the poem itself comes from another place: the muse, the goddess in her role as inspiration. The purpose of poets' training, dedication and talent is simply to make them a better – smoother, less resistant – channel. Poets, therefore, must never take credit for their work; that belongs elsewhere.

There is another problem with all this for today's reader. Graves affected a mildly irritating old-world gallantry which is completely out of place in modern times. Even so, he despised misogyny and approved women's economic equality provided it could be made to work.

In **The White Goddess**, poetry and history overlap. But is it all true? Were there matriarchies? Did Graves really believe in the great goddess, or is she some kind of metaphor? You must not ask. Things are 'either-or' in our heads, but not in the world. To think otherwise is to take Apollo's side, the side of progress, conquest and, ultimately, rape. For Graves, barely containing his disgust, writes: 'All saints revile her, and all sober men/Ruled by God Apollo's golden mean.' ■

Robert Loughrey

The White Goddess by **Robert Graves**, is published by *Faber and Faber*.

Reviews

film

The Last Dance

directed by **Tsai Ming-Liang**

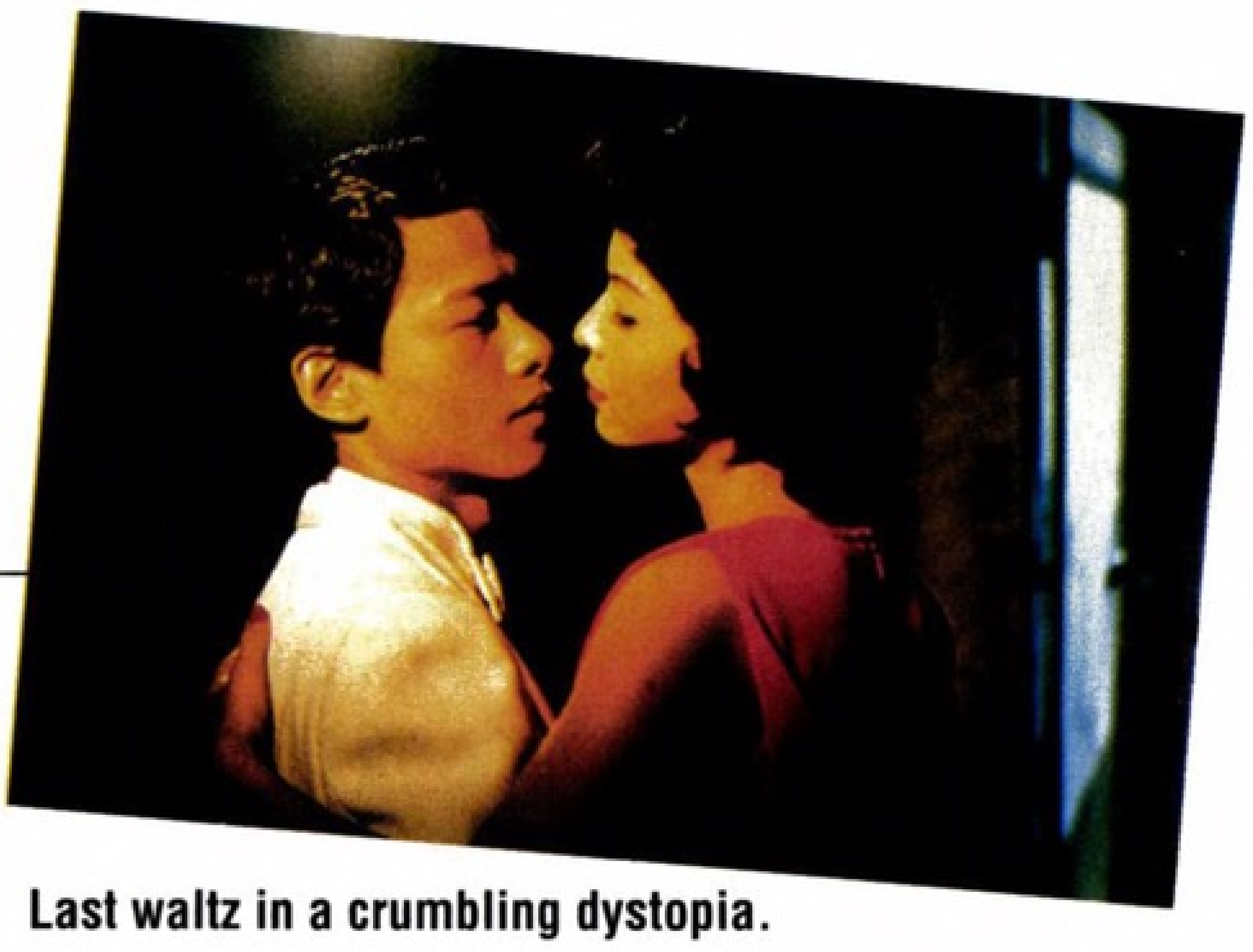
(distributed by Celluloid Dreams, Paris and Oasis Pictures, Canada).

In the traditional Astaire and Rogers or Garland and Rooney musical, characters sing and dance to communicate emotions that they can't express in the ordinary world. The everyday of the musical depicts characters caught in drab, socially confined roles. But during the song-and-dance sequences anything is possible. Inhibitions begone! Euphoria takes over. **Last Dance** takes this premise to extremes.

Veteran director Ming-Liang paints life in a dystopia of rain, crumbling apartments, and a disease-ridden city. The characters are so incapable of communication they're nearly mute. The film resonates more with Kafka than Gene Kelly, more Asimov than Astaire. Garbage pickup will be cancelled. Water will be cut off. It's seven days before the end of the millennium. A virus carried by water pollution spreads through the city, turning its victims toward roach-like behaviour, crawling into corners and holes, afraid of the light. The Government has declared that residents must leave the virus areas, but provides no alternative housing. Police fumigators appear without warning, setting off their huge smoke and chemical hoses.

Last Dance follows in the tradition of future fiction, where science is impotent and the State faceless and ineffective. It's a grim view of the world. Ming-Liang is not shy of clarifying. 'I have no optimistic thoughts about the future,' he says. 'If you live in Taiwan, you naturally feel pessimistic. We have paid a heavy price for the take-off of Taiwan's economy over the past ten years.' These may be the words of an alienated and world-weary intellectual not shared by progressive groups fighting for change on the island. But the film does carry a small spark of hope, a little consolation for his viewers.

A young man lives in a small, very sparse flat. A woman his age lives directly below. They know nothing of each other until a plumber accidentally knocks a hole in the man's floor. Later, while the couple are away at work the hole takes on a life of its own, and starts to grow. Now he can see light below and hear the woman moving around. She can peer up into his flat as well, and she begins to dream about him.



Last waltz in a crumbling dystopia.

Her fantasies are extraordinary, all in pink with plenty of sunlight streaming through. Not only that, she sings and dances with a robust crew of male dancers and sexy chorus girls. As the singers and dancers cavort in the stairwells and elevators, with brooms and fire extinguishers as props, the music that washes over them is pure 1950s Asian pop. Is she just normally boy-crazy or has she gone delirious with the virus?

Some viewers may have trouble with all this. The constant rain, peeling wallpaper, mould, and damp are quite tangible. Others might find the sogginess, the vomit and the characters' inability to eat without slurping unpleasant. The froth of the musical interludes may not provide enough consolation. And yet, the symbol of the hole is an effective device. The director's obvious skill and obsessive single-mindedness create a fiction that's creepy and memorable.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆ PS

Reviewers: **Louise Gray, George Fisher, Peter Steven, Vanessa Baird.**
Reviews editor: **Vanessa Baird**

The NI Crossword

35 by Axe

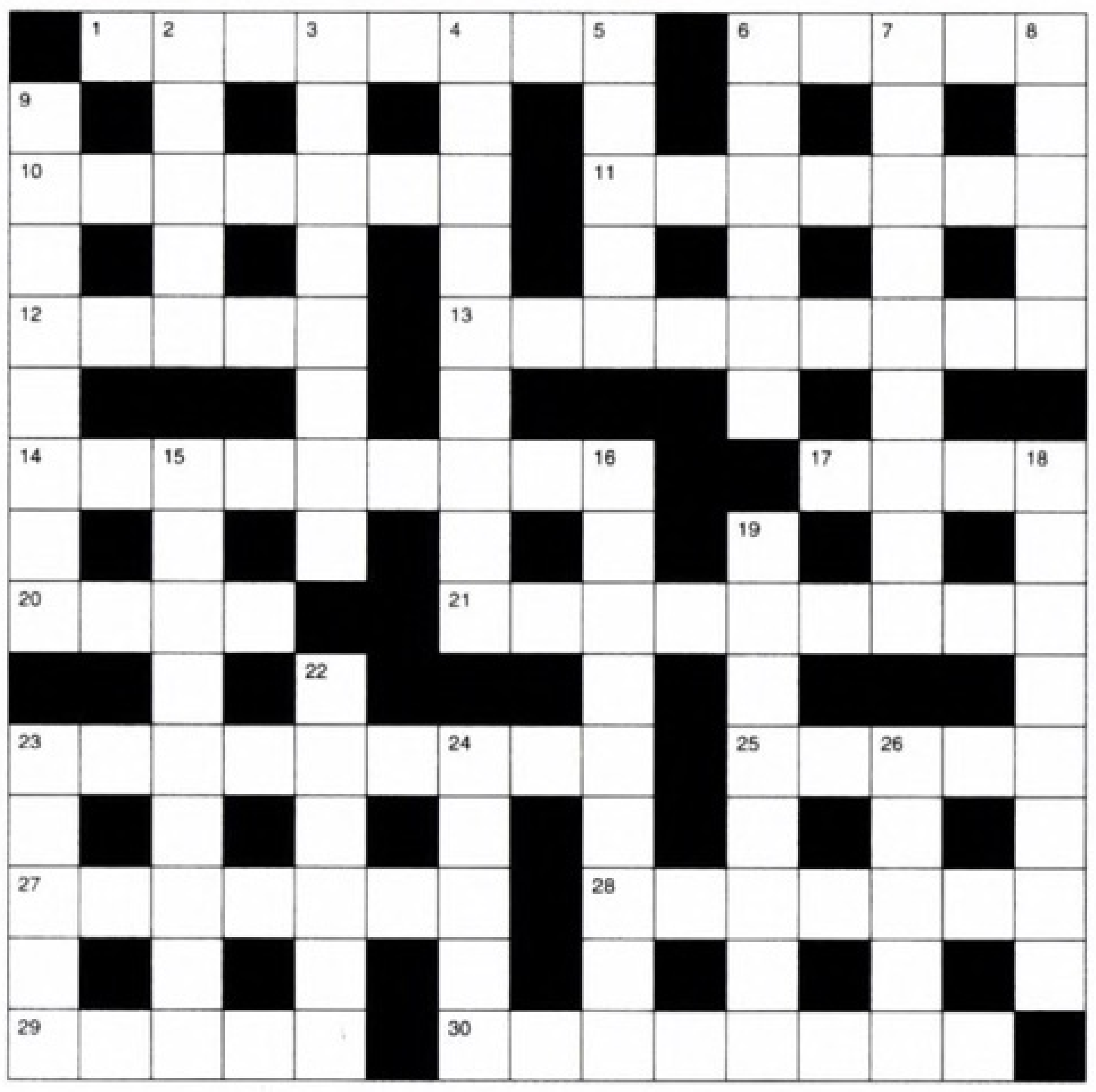
CRYPTIC

Across

- **1** A top prig gets involved in political unrest (8)
- **6** Animal dash ends with death (5)
- **10** Patriarch's a support to poor actor (7)
- **11** Khan gets to river and is soaked in the drink – he needs a rocket! (7)
- **12** Play a lute and sound Eskimo! (5)
- **13** Apropos a try to connect Northern Ireland to a region of South America (9)
- **14** Nervous USA moving into cacao extracts, taking the identity of Europeans (9)
- **17** They can't fly – those in the club using the euro go to Spain first (4)
- **20** Irish clan's short month (4)
- **21** I'm able, eventually, to roam freely with the king of ancient Brittany (9)
- **23** Balkan leader's military intelligence gets to miss partial victory (9)
- **25** Central Asian language one thousand follow after Turkic and Jordanian leads (5)
- **27** Land's End is this – in a literal way, so to speak! (7)
- **28** Cook in Aotearoa again, or mash the pile (7)
- **29** Nothing left of wise Native American-type (5)
- **30** State of madness follows having sat back (8)

Down

- **2** Eat Cheddar! (5)
- **3** South Sea islander getting brown around various parts of French-speaking Caribbean (8)
- **4** ANC man's smashed amphora over South Africa (9)
- **5** Example is back in place near Seattle (5)
- **6** Take on English three, going above seniority (6)
- **7** Account in which Geronimo loses composure, and the first point, about planning the farming (9)
- **8** Italian lady turned up negative, caught by genetic fingerprinting (5)
- **9** Where Paul sought, but could not see? (8)
- **15** America has land-locked state with lofty backways crossing the Andes (9)
- **16** Party members sit-in about vermin (9)
- **18** 'The short answer is in the skirt-folds,' it's read (8)
- **19** Perhaps 4's public relations in the ascendant – first-class learning technique is capital here! (8)
- **22** Set each, undecided – it induces torpor (6)
- **23** It's rumoured bird is to return to China in 1999? (5)
- **24** She treats animals, upwards of 550, in open grassland (5)
- **26** Jack and I go round the pub but he can't always leave the bottle! (5)



QUICK

Across

- **1** The dissemination of propaganda – originally by a communist apparatus (8)
- **6** S African antelope akin to the elk (5)
- **10** The first patriarch, acknowledged by Jews, Christians and Muslims (7)
- **11** Russian cosmonaut, first to orbit the earth in 1961 (7)
- **12** Island Inuit of the North Pacific and Bering Sea (5)
- **13** Wind-swept plateau of Chile and Argentina, settled by Welsh farmers in the nineteenth century (9)
- **14** Pertaining to the ethnic group indigenous to Europe and parts of N Africa, SW Asia and the Indian subcontinent (9)
- **17** Flightless birds of Australia, second in size to the ostrich (4)
- **20** Irish sub-tribe where grandsons' surnames are given the prefix 'O' (4)
- **21** Breton, after the Latin 'dwellers by the sea' (9)
- **23** President of the Yugoslav Federation, an advocate of a 'Greater Serbia' (9)
- **25** People and language of Persian origin, now with their own independent Central Asian state (5)
- **27** Having a sea border (7)
- **28** Maori name for Mt Cook (7)
- **29** Native American tribe, originating in the Ohio Valley, moving to Missouri and Kansas, and ending up on an Oklahoma reservation (5)
- **30** Australia's smallest state (8)

Down

- **2** Ravine, the result of river action or cave roof collapse (5)
- **3** Inhabitant of the largest Polynesian island (8)
- **4** Elected Secretary-General of the ANC in 1991 (9)
- **5** Name of the inlet which drains north out of Washington State (5)
- **6** Lock horns with (6)
- **7** Pertaining to the planning of rural farming (9)
- **8** Italian female title, formerly applied only to nobles (5)
- **9** Capital of Syria (8)
- **15** Main pass across the Andes between Argentina and Chile (9)
- **16** Members of a US political party (9)
- **18** Ancient language of the Hindus (8)
- **19** Administrative capital of South Africa (8)
- **22** African flies (genus Glossina), cause of sleeping sickness (6)
- **23** Former Portuguese colony on the Chinese coast, infamous for its gambling (5)
- **24** Upland plain of southern Africa (5)
- **26** Spirit of Muslim folklore (5)

■	M	A	U	U	N	L	O	A	■	T	I	G	R	E
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Ataturk's children

Repression is the legacy of a regime in Turkey where anything goes – so long as it's not Islamic and doesn't suggest political opposition. **Arzu Merali** pays a visit.

We trudged around the standard sights of Istanbul: Orthodox monuments and retreats, the Basilica cistern, signposts in Latin and Slavic script to cater for the tourists. Our trip was a snapshot of radical Europhilia and consumerism – and of a country mired in the murder of 10,000 political prisoners in ten years.

We had arrived on the 75th anniversary of the Republic. Its founder, Mustafa Kemal Pasha, took the title Ataturk – Father of the Turks. His image, Nietzsche's last man – amoral, apolitical and above all modern – looked down on his subjects from all the lamp posts.

The end of history would indeed be nigh if the West's perception of Turkey as a 'modernizing' and 'democratizing' state had any meaning. Turkish George Michaels and Madonnas perform on terrestrial and satellite TV channels. Advertisements for shampoo and exotic night-life are set beside semi-naked women on billboards selling cars. A culture of imported (female) and indigenous (male) prostitution mimics the meaning of freedom. Ataturk's children can buy (into) it all. But still they resist.

Nazat Ashik is in her fifties. She has set up an organization to help prisoners and their families, in a country where even criticizing the founding dictator is still treason and no-one knows exactly how many prisoners there are. Her son, Mustafa, is serving a 17-year sentence for writing against the Government. He bled from his genitalia for two months before admitting the charge. Turkish prison officers use similar methods to the Algerian and Iraqi security forces – electric shocks, dousing in cold water, buggery with broken bottles.

Mazlumder is the name of a human-rights organization with 22 branches around the country. Since the 1997 ruling by the National Security Council (an amalgam of politicians and generals) that Muslims were the 'number-one enemy of the principles of modern Turkey', its offices have been repeatedly raided. Three were recently closed down and the organization's accounts frozen.

I first met Ipek Firat at Mazlumder. She had been detained during a prison visit to her husband, Mehmet, who is an alleged associate of an Islamist group. Together with their cellmate, the journalist Gul Aslan, they were repeatedly tortured. Ipek was released without charge. Her husband 'confessed' and is now serving 15- and 22-year sentences consecutively.

Aslan's case hasn't been heard in two-and-a-half years. I met her in Bandirma Prison. Behind two sets of bars and reinforced perspex she looked far older than her 24 years. 'Don't worry about me,' she smiled, almost smug in her passive resistance. 'The fact that I'm here means they, the generals, are scared... It's only a matter of time before their rule will end.' How long would that be? In her lifetime? Conscious that her lifetime might be considerably shorter than most, she answered: 'Maybe. God willing.'

Our unofficial guide, Rabia, is articulate, intelligent and determined – a veritable heroine of the human-rights epic that is gripping her country. She is one among thousands of Turkish women students who have been banned from attending university. She is 'suspended' because she is a practising Muslim who wears a headscarf. The ban on headscarves is now more strictly enforced than at any time since the military coups of the 1980s. Few teachers are brave enough to allow any choice – 'treason' covers many crimes. So every day groups of students arrive at class. Every day the police remove them. Every day they show their defiance by holding their own classes on the pavements outside.

In October 1998 countrywide demonstrations in support of veiled students saw four million protesters – male and female, veiled and mini-skirted – hold hands. Only a skirmish between police and protesters in Ankara made the news. These are never 'Ataturk's children'.

Women like Rabia, Ipek and Gul have, however, become the new advocates of emancipation in Turkey. Akit, a well-respected secular periodical, asked: 'Why not be like Iran?' Turkey has fewer women in universities, the medical profession or the media. The Ayatollah has outstripped Ataturk.

Islamaphobia in Turkey is one of the more ridiculous imports from a Europe the generals so desperately wish to join. Istanbul's elected Mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was prosecuted for reading out Ottoman poetry in public. He was sentenced to a year in prison and a lifetime ban from all political activities. Westernization, says the author Emine Senlikoglu, means that 'anything goes' – except political opposition. She currently awaits the outcome of two cases against her for proposing an independent judiciary. Her first prison term was for a book on freedom of speech, her second for answering from a conference platform a question about why she was imprisoned.

Aslan's husband, Tamar, still suffers torture. She too was arrested on a prison visit. Their three-year-old daughter sees them every two weeks – had Aslan been a common criminal, her child could have stayed with her.

'What's your daughter's name?' I asked as the little girl ran around the prison visitors' hall.

'Azad,' she replied. 'FREEDOM.'

Arzu Merali is a freelance journalist based in London.

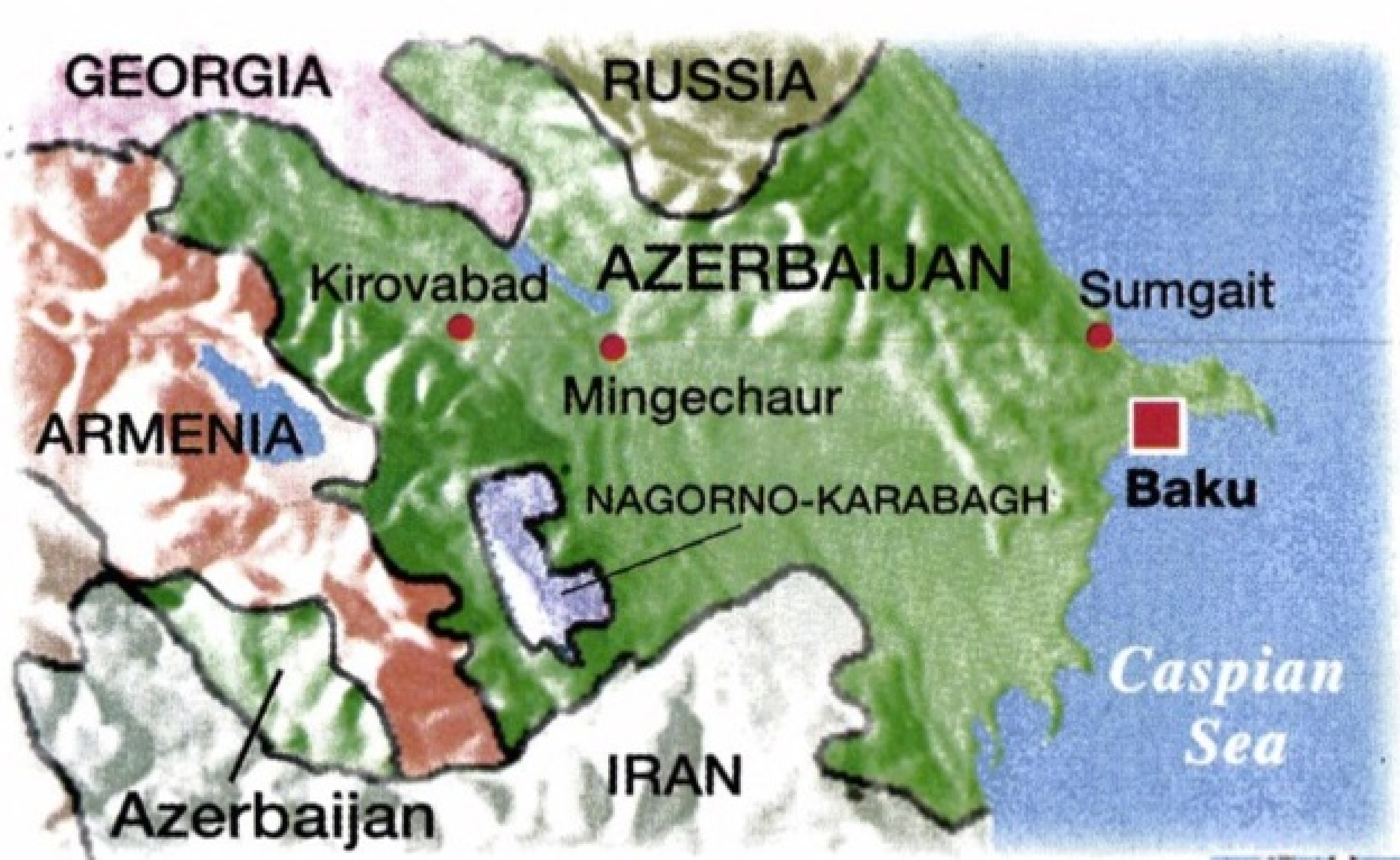
VakifBan
ERDOG
KATILLERI

Every Saturday in Istanbul, Mothers of the Disappeared bear witness on the streets.

OMIK KRIKARIAN / PANOS PICTURES

Country profile Azerbaijan

AZERBAIJAN'S oil springs were first mentioned by Marco Polo in the thirteenth century. Describing the abundance of this substance which oozed from the ground he noted that it was not to be used for cooking, but was 'good to burn'. It is this oil that has recently attracted international companies to invest huge amounts of Western money (to date about $2.5 billion) in this Caucasian country on the western shore of the Caspian Sea.



This is not the first time that the country has attracted oil entrepreneurs. By the late nineteenth century the Rockefellers, Rothschilds and Nobles had all made fortunes here. Their grand, European-style mansions can be found in the cobbled, vine-laden avenues of the old town in the capital, Baku, where the elegant rooms are witness to a style of life long gone.

Today's boom is prompting a similar spending spree. Over the last decade new mansions have sprung up and the paraphernalia of new wealth at the end of the twentieth century abounds: satellite dishes, luxury cars, mobile phones. The new wealth and visitors no longer compete for tables at the traditional *caravanserai* eating in small alcoves around a medieval courtyard; instead they are attracted to trendy Western-style restaurants.

Azerbaijan was incorporated into the Russian Empire in the early nineteenth century. Briefly independent from 1918, it was invaded again in 1920 and became the Soviet republic of Transcaucasia. In 1992, following the break-up of the Soviet Union and in the euphoria of new democracy, former communist leader Heydar Aliev was replaced by the pro-Turk Abulsaz Elchibey, who attempted to lead the country towards closer connections with the West. Soaring inflation and war with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabagh swiftly led to disillusion. By 1993 Aliev was again in power and guiding the country back into a close relationship with Russia.

President Aliev – former general in the KGB and Politburo member, now converted to capitalism – has proved to be a wily negotiator. He is widely believed to have sided with the Armenians and the Russians to force Azerbaijan to return to Moscow's sphere of influence. In the presidential election of October 1998, Aliev won 76.1 per cent of the vote. The election has been described as 'a sham' by international monitors but was marginally more realistic than the 98.6 per cent support that he had claimed in 1993.

But the loud signs of wealth in Baku are a veneer; it stretches no further than the city limits. Oil companies have driven a hard bargain. They have insisted that they recover their investment first so it will be at least ten years before the broader population benefits. The current concentration of wealth in the hands of a small élite is leading to growing discontent. Opposition criticism during the election campaign of the regime's corruption and incompetence has also had a lasting impact.

The war with Armenia remains unresolved since the ceasefire of 1994. Azerbaijan has effectively lost not only Nagorno ('mountainous') Karabagh but the Valley of Karabagh too. The country carries a huge price from this war in that one in seven of its population is a refugee – the highest per-capita refugee population in the world. Aliev supports a negotiated settlement for Nagorno-Karabagh; this may be logical but it is not popular.

Despite his recent electoral victory, Aliev's power is no longer secure. The golden age that oil promised to bring has not materialized. Defeated at war, carrying a huge refugee burden, dissent burgeoning: this is a country more than ready for a change. ■

Juliet Crawley Peck

AT A GLANCE

CAROLINE PENN / PANOS PICTURES

Leader President Heydar Aliev

Economy GNP per capita $480 (Russia $2,410, Japan $40,940). Principally dependent on oil. Outside investment is attracted by tax breaks. The majority of the population remains agricultural, cultivating citrus fruits, grapes and cotton with some tobacco. Soaring transport costs restrict exports to Russia: almost all (including cotton fibre, cement and plastics) go to Europe and the Middle East. The IMF figure of 9% economic growth in 1998 is widely disbelieved.

People 7.7 million. There are an estimated one million refugees from the war with Armenia.

Health Infant mortality 34 per 1,000 live births (Russia 20, Canada 6). Half the population does not have sewerage facilities while only a quarter of all water is treated.

Environment There is extensive soil pollution from pesticides, particularly from the highly toxic defoliants used on cotton crops.

Culture Turkic Azeris 83%; Russians 6%; Armenians 6%. Other minorities include Georgians, and Kurds 'ethnically cleansed' by the Armenians in 1992-93.

Religion: Shi'ite Islam.

Language: Azeri is the official language but Russian is still widely used, especially in Baku.

Sources *World Guide 1999-2000; The State of the World's Children 1999; Europe Review 1998; thanks to Thomas Goltz and Laurent Ruseckaas.*

Never previously profiled

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★
Investment is limited to the oil industry. Wealth remains in the hands of a small élite in the capital.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★★
Potential oil and gas wealth makes Azerbaijan a country of importance as well as giving it a significant bargaining tool when dealing with Russia.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
In Baku middle-class young women are finding work with foreign companies but rural areas are deeply traditional.

LITERACY ★★★★★
The level of literacy is high thanks to the inherited Soviet education system. All children go to school until 16.

FREEDOM ★★★
Democracy is limited but the opposition was allowed to lambast Aliev on state television during the election.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★
71 years. Compares with neighbouring Iran's 69 years and a world high of Japan's 80 years.

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★★ Even without election fraud Azerbaijan commentators believe Aliev would have received the majority vote but criticism is mounting. Aliev's attempts to put his own family in positions of power and influence (his son Sokar is head of the State Oil Company) are resented. Genuine democracy may slowly emerge over the next decade.

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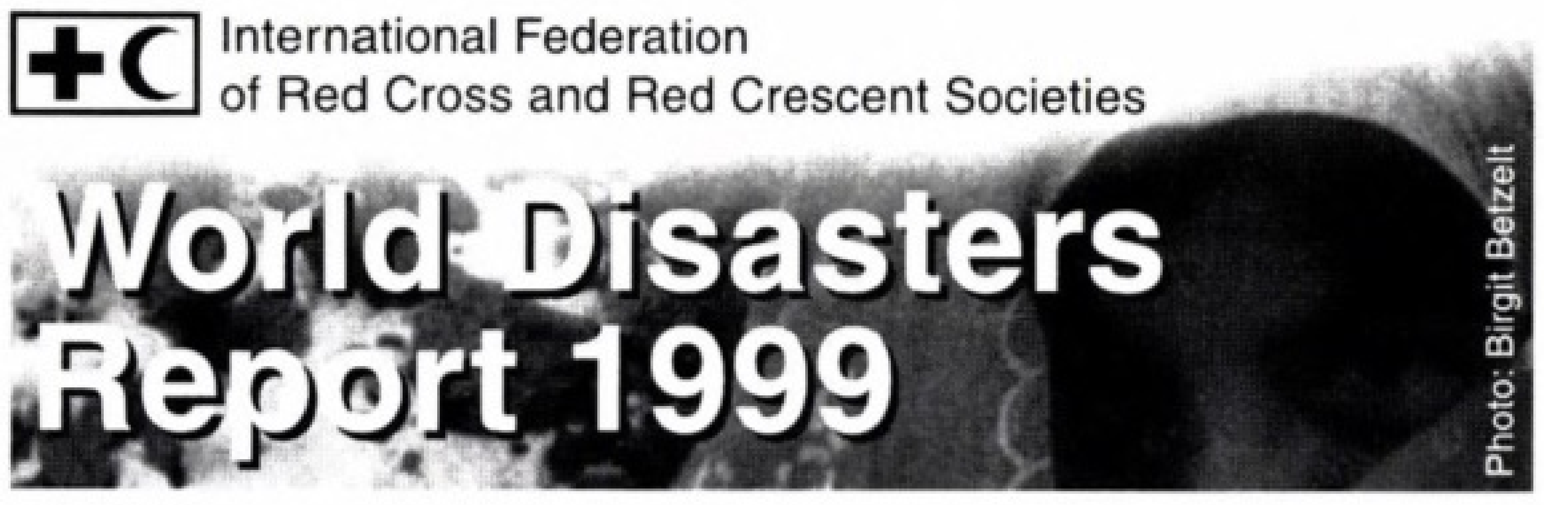

World Disasters Report 1999

Photo: Birgit Betzelt

How will climate change affect tomorrow's world? Who is threatened by rising tides, droughts, deforestation, hurricanes or spreading disease? Where are the flash points for future resource wars? What should politicians, aid workers, donors and companies do about it?

These are among the issues examined in the 208-page *World Disasters Report 1999*, which focuses on: environmental trends, disasters and their implications; floods in Asia; poverty and institutional collapse in Russia; earthquakes in Afghanistan; El Niño's impact on Central America and the South Pacific. We track the humanitarian system: examining falling aid budgets and the Sphere Project for minimum standards in disaster response. Plus a disasters database and Red Cross/Red Crescent listings.

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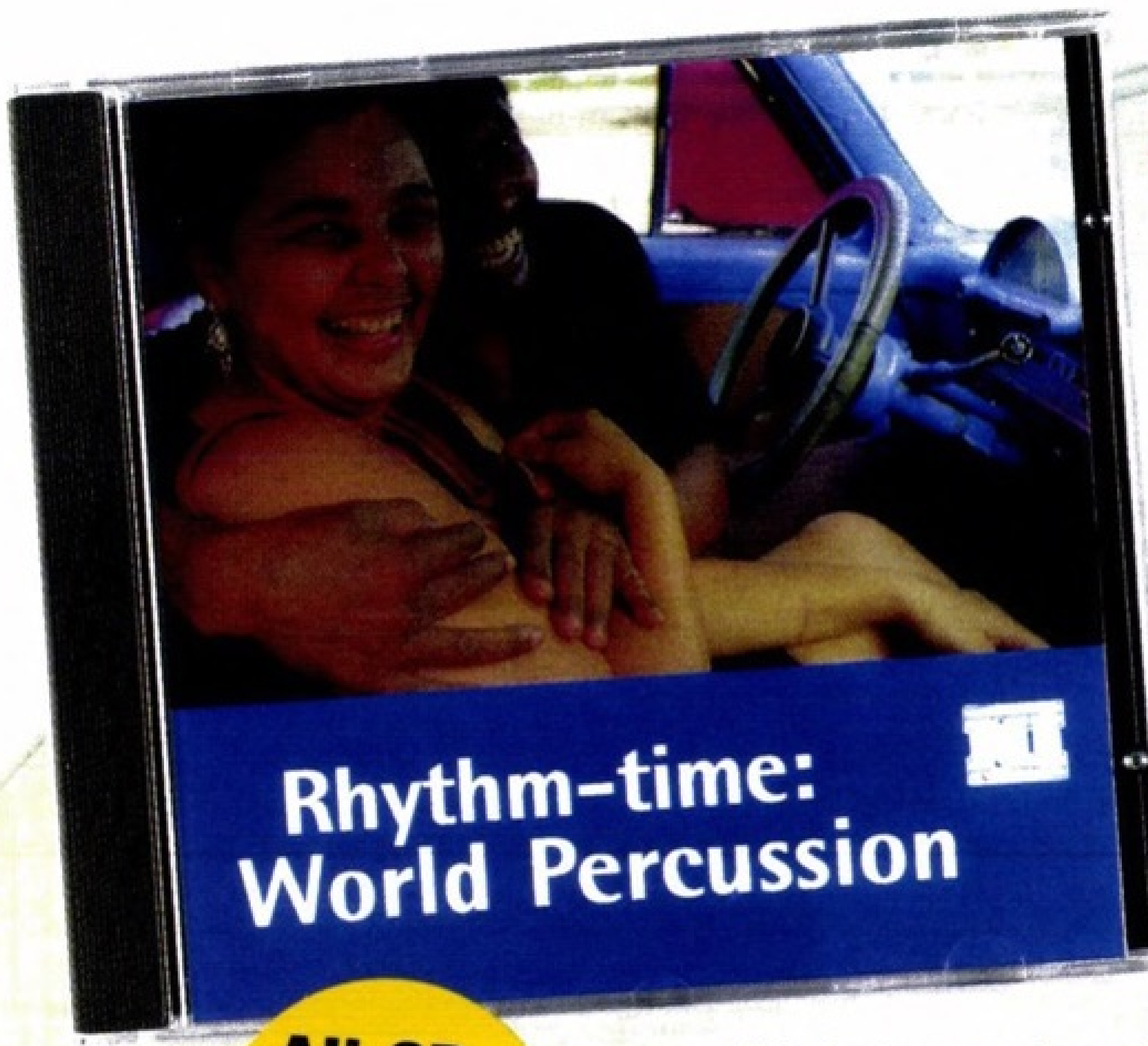

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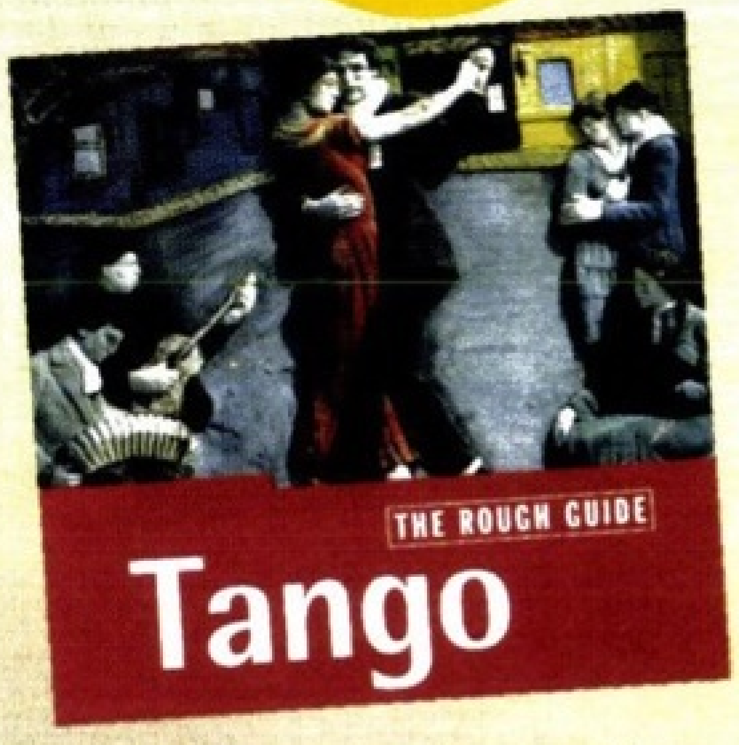

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Forget the image of mannered ballroom-dancing. Tango is a real roots music: sometimes sleazy, sometimes elegant, but always sensuous, rhythmic and passionate. This album features Carlos Gendel who before his death in an air crash in 1935 transformed the formerly lowlife dance style into a mass culture enjoyed by all social classes. Also Astor Piazzola, the key figure in the history of modern tango, and many others, to provide a comprehensive view of Argentina's best loved export.

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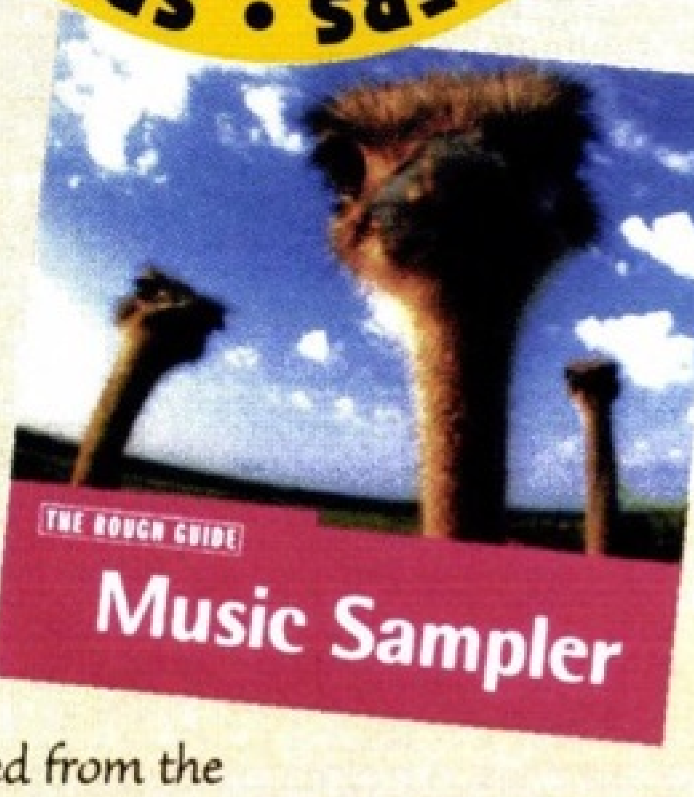

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A roller coaster ride of 16 tracks selected from the wide variety of albums produced in the Rough Guide series since 1994. Examples of the albums and musicians featured are from Zimbabwe - Thomas Mapfumo, The Andes - Into Illimani, English Roots - Hank Dogs, Cajun and Zydeco - David Doucet, Reggae - The Congos, Jazz - Bessie Smith.

All between 65 and 80 minutes

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From powwow to polka, from sacred songs to cross cultural and urban sounds this album displays the full range of Native American music. Recently there has been a major revival and this is showcased in this album which features the contemporary flute, guitar and percussion of Burning Sky, the uplifting vocal harmonies of Walela (featuring Rita Coolidge), and singer-songwriters Sharon Burch and Bill Miller.

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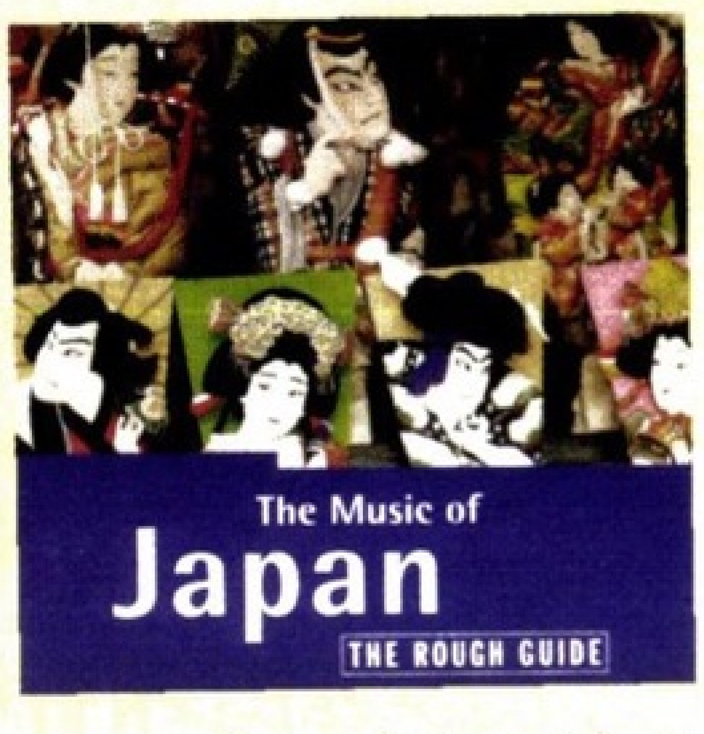


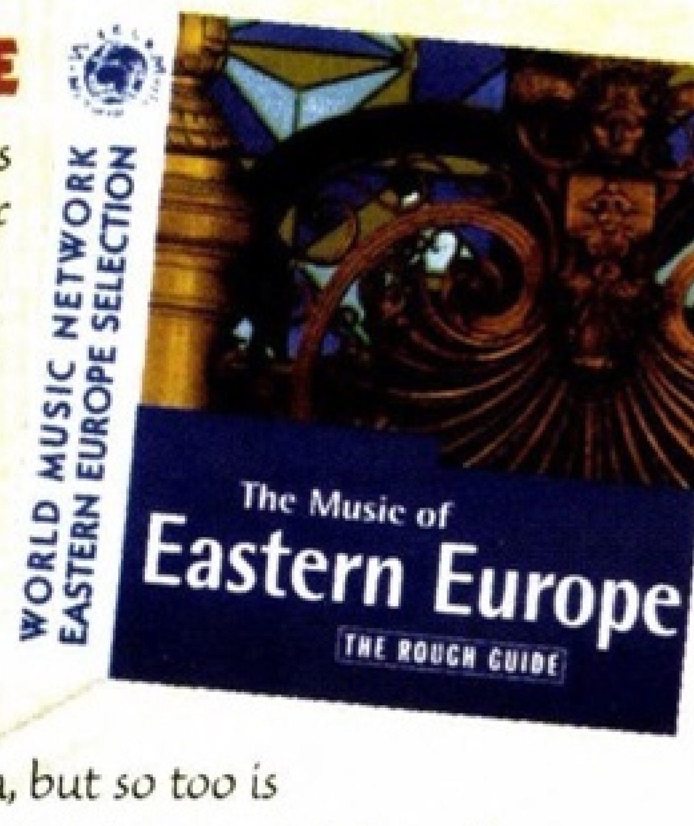
JAPAN

Just released, this unique album offers 75 minutes from leading Japanese musicians who display a fascinating mix of traditional music blended with contemporary sounds. There's a fresh surprise in each of the 19 tracks, whether it is the James Bond Theme played by the Surf Champlers, the beautiful and haunting music produced by the kotos (zithers) of Koto Vortex, or the thrilling energy of the brass band Cicala Mvta. Many of the performers offer radical interpretations of traditional songs and are clearly well attuned to modern music in other cultures. Stick this on your Sony for a real treat.

EASTERN EUROPE

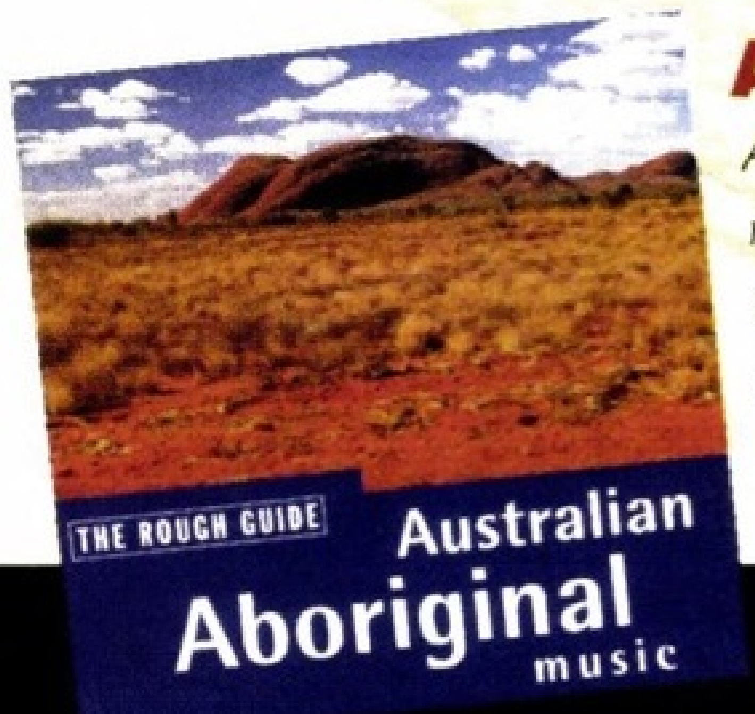
A rich collection from this musically and culturally diverse area. Some of Europe's foremost and most inspired vocalists are featured. Marta Sebestyen, the greatest interpreter of Hungarian folk music and featured on the soundtrack of The English Patient, The Mystery of Bulgarian Voices Choir with their famous traditional and complex harmonies, and Trio Bulgarka. There is exuberant dance music from Apparatshcik (Russia) and Ferus Mustafov (Macedonia) and the rich culture of the Gypsy people is demonstrated by Tarafde Haidouks (The Orchestra of Honourable Brigands).

"It's a splendid sampler" SONGLINES



AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL

Against a history of exploitation and pain Aboriginal artists have now arrived as a powerful force in contemporary music and one bound up with the struggle for land rights and an end to discrimination. Politics is always on the agenda, but so too is spirituality. Singer-songwriters include wife and husband. Ruby Hunter and Archie Roach. There is also traditional music in its purest form with several field recordings. And, of course there is the didgeridoo whose deep resonant tone has become the most distinctive addition to contemporary Aboriginal bands.



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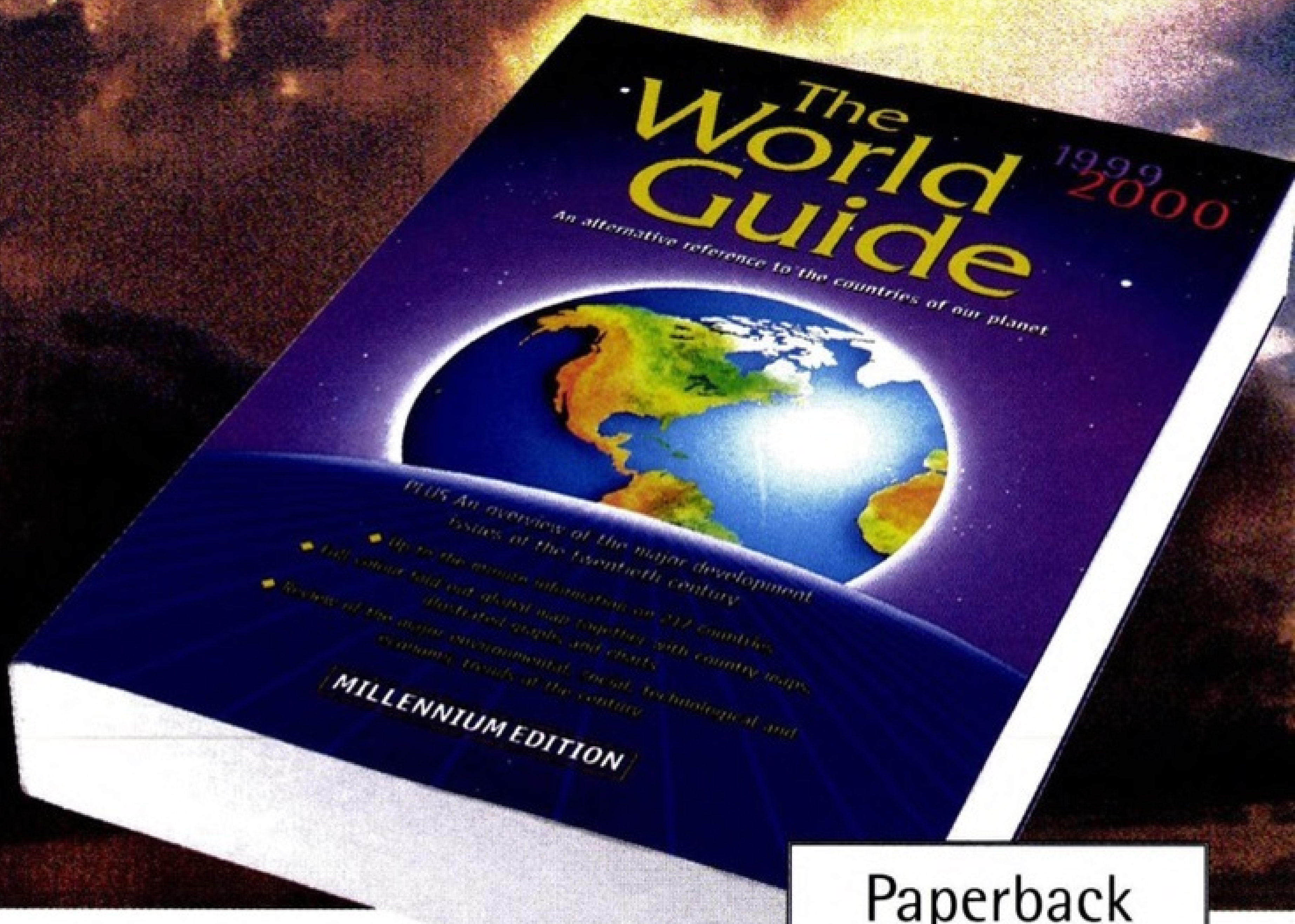

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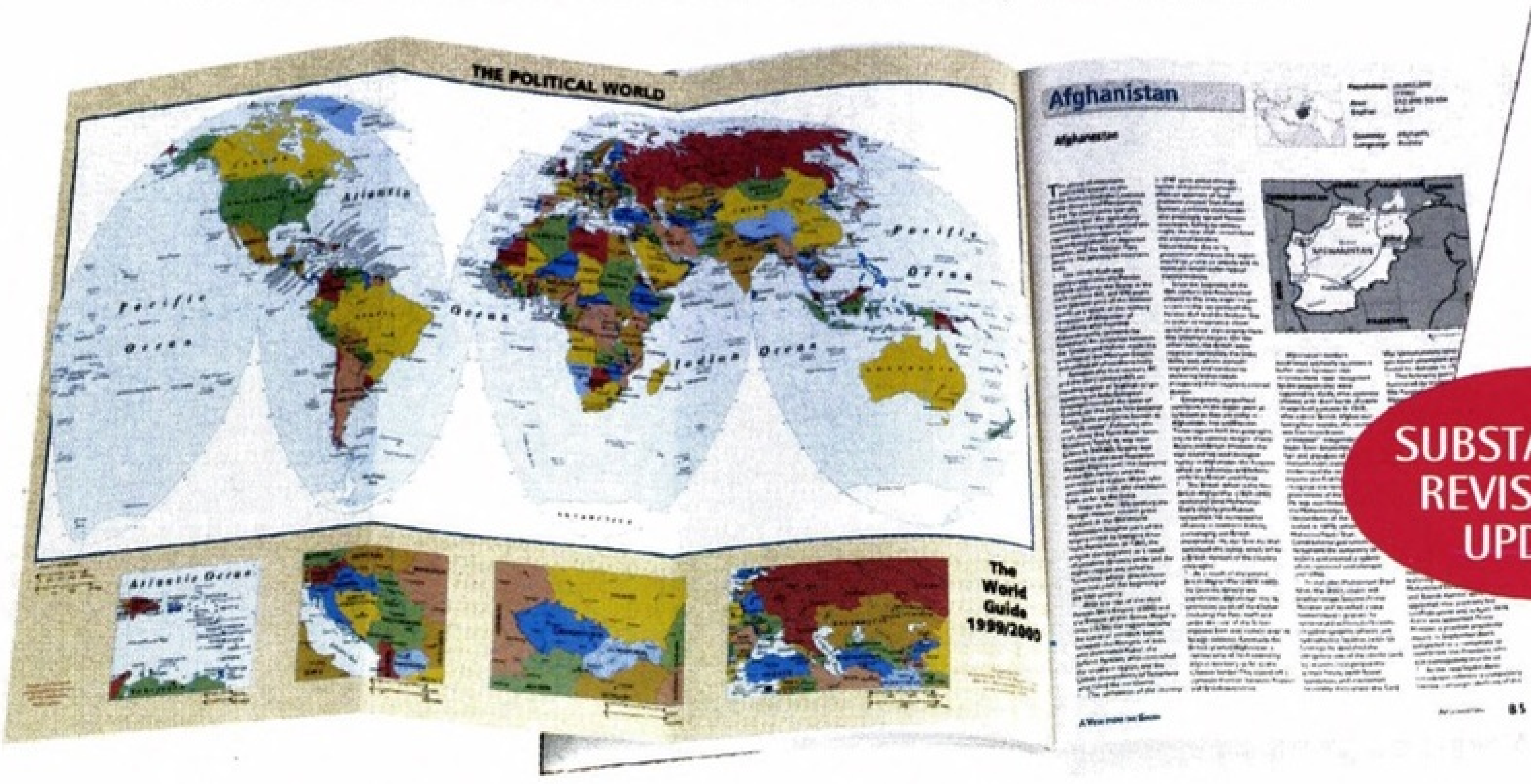

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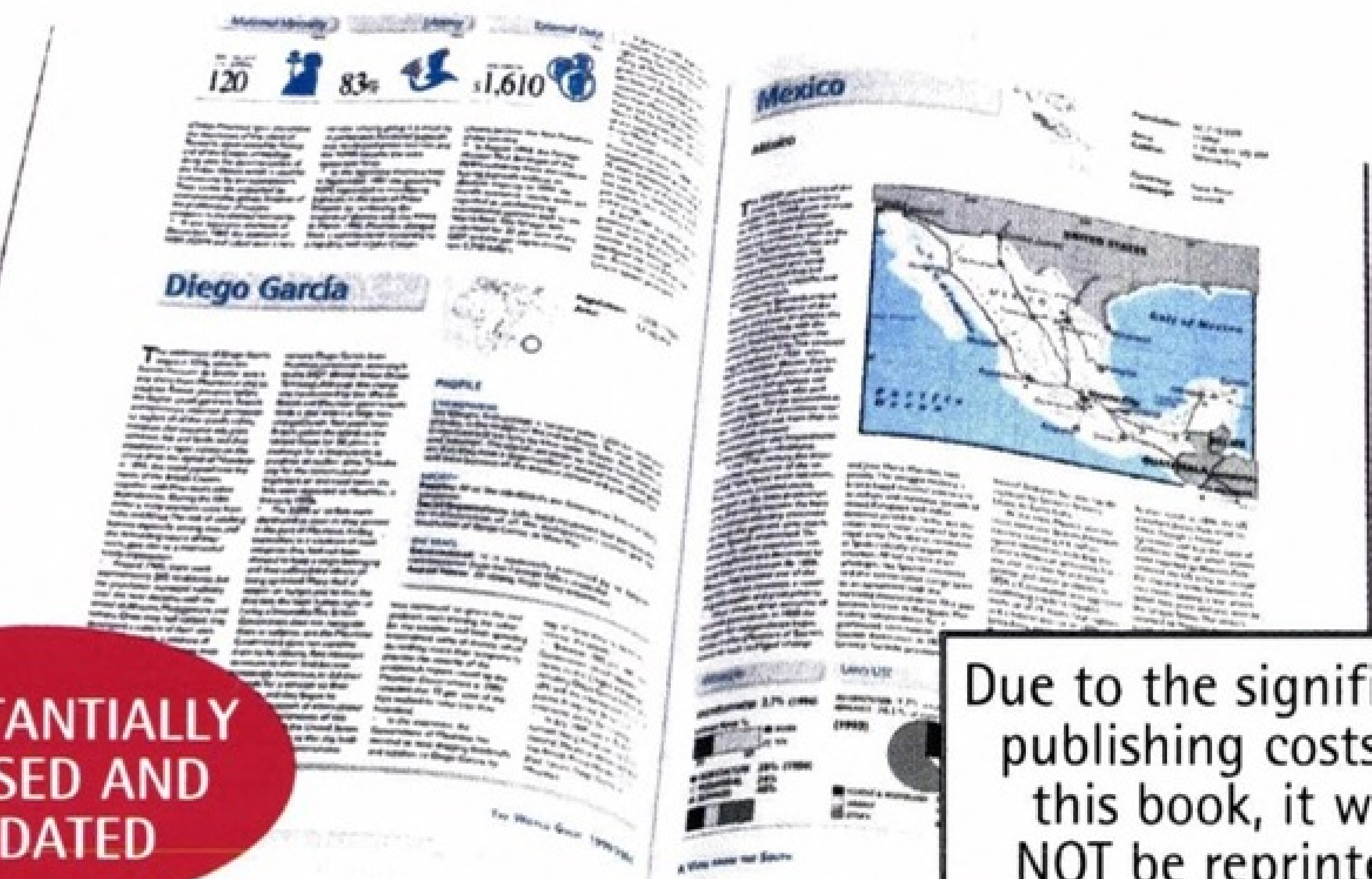

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